DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 300 795 CS 009 406

AUTHOR	Weaver, Constance; Groff, Patrick
TITLE	Two Reactions to the Report Card on Basal Readers--The Basalization of America: A Cause for Concern and An Attack on Basal Readers for the Wrong Reasons. Arena Debate in Print Series No. 1.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, Bloomington, IN.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	89
CONTRACT	RI88062001
NOTE	51p.
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, Indiana University, Smith Research Center 150, 2805 E. 10th St., Bloomington, IN 47408 ($4.95 plus $1.50 postage and handling).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Basal Reading; Elementary Education; *Reading Attitudes; Reading Comprehension; *Reading Materials; Textbook Content
IDENTIFIERS	Educational Issues

ABSTRACT

The publication of the "Report Card on Basal Readers" has generated a wide range of reactions and this first document issued in the ARENA series focuses on two of these reactions. The two reactions articulated in this debate represent opposite responses to the "Report." The first section, by Constance Weaver, examines first the philosophy implicit in basal series, its ramifications, and its out-of-date research base, and then argues that basal publishers should revise their materials to reflect advances in knowledge about how children learn to read. The second section, by Patrick Groff, offers a critique of the "Report Card" by asking whether it is more or less likely that the reading program that it proposes will bring on greater achievement in reading for children than can the typical basal system. The two debaters then respond to one another's essays and, in the final section, offer conclusions. Ninety-one references are appended. (MS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ARENA 1

debate in print

ED300795

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Two Reactions to the *Report Card on Basal Readers*

Constance Weaver

The Basalization of America: A Cause for Concern

Patrick Groff

An Attack on Basal Readers for the Wrong Reasons

CS009406

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills

Indiana University
Smith Research Center
2805 East Tenth Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47408
(812) 855-5847

1989

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RI88062001. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

While opiniors and positions expressed by authors in *ARENA* publications are expected to represent those of professional educators other than just the authors, they are not deemed necessarily to represent the opinion of a majority of educators; nor do they necessarily represent the official view of ERIC or the Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.

Two Reactions to the *Report Card on Basal Readers*

The publication of the *Report Card on Basal Readers* (Goodman *et al.*, 1988) has generated a wide range of reactions. It has given heart to some teachers and other professionals involved in reading instruction, and has led to NCTE resolutions in November, 1988, that options for reading instruction be kept open to approaches that do not rely on basal readers. But the *Report Card* has provoked critical responses from others. Few reactions to the publication have been dispassionate, and as it is more widely read and discussed, it seems highly probable that it will engender additional debate and discussion—some of it intense.

Thus it seems appropriate for this first issue of *ARENA*, a debate in print, to focus on two reactions to the *Report Card*. Designed and edited by the staff of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, *ARENA* will highlight issues and trends within the Clearinghouse's scope.

This review of the *Report Card* gives the reader an indication of the major thrusts and recommendations of a book that resulted from three years of planning and writing. In 1985, the Commission on Reading of the National Council of Teachers of English requested and received support from the NCTE Research Trustees to undertake a project that would "demystify the basal reader and attempt to clarify basals in terms of philosophy, economy, and politics." (Watson and Weaver, 1988) The Commission on Reading is one of six "deliberative and advisory bodies" of NCTE, with the mission of identifying and reporting on key issues in reading to the NCTE Executive Council.

Kenneth Goodman, a member of the Commission, enlisted the aid of Patrick Shannon, Yvonne Freeman, and Sharon Murphy in writing the *Report Card* for the Commission. Goodman had long been a well-known researcher and theorist in reading; Shannon had investigated basals extensively; Freeman had recently completed an extensive study of Spanish basal readers; and Murphy had examined testing procedures in basals. A year and a half of writing was informed by reactions of Commission members to successive drafts.

Constance Weaver, one of the authors of this debate in print and currently Director of the NCTE Commission on Reading, reports that the intent of the authors was to

> ...document the historical development of the basal reader and its current status, describe the making of basal reading programs and the economics of basals, analyze the nature of contemporary basals, and discuss alternatives within and without basals. Recognizing that the current state of basals and of American reading instruction is not the responsibility of any one group, the authors end by recommending actions to be taken by teachers and teacher educators, administrators and policy makers, researchers and professional associations, and the authors, editors, and publishers of basals.

Patrick Groff, however, is one reader of the report who feels that these objectives were pursued within predefined perspectives which have limited the report's objectivity.

While the two reactions articulated in this debate represent opposite responses to the *Report Card on Basal Readers*, they are not intended to cover all issues raised in the report. What is hoped, however, is that they may encourage readers to pursue these and other related issues and perspectives for themselves.

Many readers of *ARENA 1* will want to read for themselves the *Report Card on Basal Readers*, published by Richard C. Owen Publishers. A description of the genesis of the *Report Card* which gives a synopsis of its contents (Watson and Weaver, 1988) is available at no cost from Richard C. Owen Publishers. Also, the NCTE Commission on Reading has prepared a one-sheet "executive summary"

position statement on basal reading programs, as well as a longer position statement; both are available from the National Council of Teachers of English.

ERIC/RCS is grateful to Constance Weaver and to Patrick Groff for accepting invitations to debate the findings of the *Report Card on Basal Readers*. The procedure, which naturally pairs the authors as close and conflicting reviewers of each other's work, is a grueling one which involves the exchange of the first two parts of both authors' manuscripts and all editorial reactions to them. The edited opening statements were exchanged so the authors could write their responses. Then the edited responses were exchanged, and the conclusions were written.

Constance Weaver

The Basalization of America: A Cause for Concern

Constance Weaver is a Professor of English at Western Michigan University, where she teaches courses in the reading and writing processes and in a whole language approach to literacy. She is currently Director of the Commission on Reading of the National Council of Teachers of English. Her major publications include the recent *Reading Process and Practice: From Socio-psycholinguistics to Whole Language* (Heinemann, 1988) and *Grammar for Teachers* (National Council of Teachers of English, 1979). She is also co-author of an elementary language arts series and a high school language and composition series. Her current interests include a whole language approach to both child and adult literacy, the new paradigm in the sciences and in reading and literary theory, and the possible relationships between left- and right-hemispheric functioning in the brain and various aspects of the reading process.

Opening statement 4
Response to Groff 14
Conclusion 31

This process demands of ARENA writers self confidence; careful, sincere thinking and writing; expertise in the area debated; and a willingness to subject one's observations to the exceptionally close scrutiny that accompanies those observations in print. RCS believes that these qualities are essential to effective scholarship and that Weaver and Groff are to be commended for their openness and willingness to participate in the production of this publication—particularly in the light of the rigid time constraints under which it has been developed.

Carl B. Smith
Director, ERIC/RCS

Patrick Groff

An Attack on Basal Readers for the Wrong Reasons

Patrick Groff, Professor of Education at San Diego State University since 1955, has written books on both children's literature and the word recognition of young readers. He is a long-time proponent of teaching word recognition directly and systematically, which, he observes, allows children to concentrate on reading superior literature as quickly as possible. After publishing over 300 articles and books on literacy development, he is convinced that part of the cause of illiteracy in the United States is the failure of teachers to implement this recommendation adequately. He has no connection with any basal reader publisher nor with any other school book company.

Opening statement	*8*
Response to Weaver	*23*
Conclusion	*38*

The Basalization of America: A Cause for Concern

by Constance Weaver

In 1985 when the Commission on Reading of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) asked Kenneth Goodman to undertake a study of basal reading programs, we were motivated not so much by the national reports on the nation's literacy as by personal observation during our day-to-day interactions with teachers and children. In traditional classrooms, most children were learning to read at least minimally, even though some were not succeeding very well in their reading programs.

We also saw, however, what others have documented: that even the "good" readers typically read for surface accuracy and details rather than for thoughtful response, and that, all too often, they read just to answer questions rather than for enjoyment or to gain information or understanding (Applebee *et al.*, 1988). In short, we noticed that in the typical curriculum-oriented classroom, children were more likely to go mechanically through the paces of their lessons (Bloome, 1987) than to engage meaningfully in reading, writing, and thinking.

"Is there something about... basal reading programs... that might contribute to...passive and superficial reading...?"

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) studies further document what we have observed: that although the majority of our young people are learning to read at a surface level, they are not learning to reason effectively about what they read and write. Few, in fact, are able to analyze, evaluate, and extend the ideas that they encounter in print (Applebee *et al.*, 1987; Venezky *et al.*, 1987). As business and industry repeatedly tell us, such superficial literacy is no longer enough in our increasingly complex and technological society.

Knowing that basal reading systems are used in more than 90 percent of the nation's classrooms (Anderson *et al.*, 1985), we on the NCTE's Commission on Reading naturally asked ourselves a question that others too have asked (*e.g.*, Venezky *et al.*,1987; Anderson *et al.*, 1985): Is there something about today's basal reading programs, or about basal programs as a genre, that might contribute to such passive and superficial reading as that documented by the NAEP reports?

This and other questions were explored for the Commission by Kenneth Goodman, Patrick Shannon, Yvonne Freeman, and Sharon Murphy. In addition to examining previous research on basals and the use of basals, they also undertook detailed analyses of several current basal reading programs (mostly with 1986 or 1985 copyright dates), including the six series that together account for about 80 percent of the money spent on basals (Goodman *et al.*, 1988, p. 46). This research and analysis culminated in the *Report Card on Basal Readers* (Goodman *et al.*, 1988).

The authors of the *Report Card* freely admit that "While we have tried to be fair in this report we have not tried to be neutral. We are concerned for what is good or bad for learners and the teachers trying to help them become literate." (Goodman *et al.*, 1988, p. v)

Hence the authors made scant mention of recent improvements in basal reading programs, but focused instead on problems and concerns that

remain. I shall do the same, for now focusing only upon the philosophy implicit in basal series, its ramifications, and its out-of-date research base.

The basic premise, promise, and principle of the basal program

"The central *premise* of the basal reader is that a sequential, all-inclusive set of instructional materials can teach all children to read." (Goodman *et al.*, 1988, p. 1) The implicit *promise* to administrators and teachers is that if the program is followed in detail, then they are not to blame if pupils fail to read easily and well; any problems must lie with the learners themselves (p. 103). Naturally, in order to deliver on this promise, the basal reading programs must *control* teaching and learning; thus control becomes the guiding *principle* of the basal programs (p.97).

"...control becomes the guiding principle of the basal programs."

What is controlled? Virtually everything, at least in theory. For example:

1. The basals control the reading curriculum. The various instructional, practice and assessment activities associated with basals demand so much time that there is very little, if any, for other reading and writing.
2. The basals control teachers through the language used in the teachers' manuals. Instead of offering suggestions, the TMs give directions: "Do this." "Do that." While teachers can of course ignore the directions, they typically buy into the implicit promise of the basal, perhaps in part because they are intimidated by the imperative language of the teachers' manuals as well as by the fact that the basal programs appear to be "scientific" (Goodman *et al.*, 1988, pp. 40-43). In any case, the language of the TMs suggests to both teachers and administrators that teachers are not competent to make instructional decisions, even on minutiae. Such an implication undermines the professionalism of teachers instead of enhancing it.
3. The basals control students in a variety of ways, one of the most insidious being through the use of questions to which a single "right" answer is expected, usually an answer based upon the text itself (p. 81). Often, "Even when the question is intended to draw on 'background knowledge' and require 'critical thinking,' a simple conformist answer is suggested as a model." (p. 77)
4. The basals control the sequence in which reading "skills" (and now sometimes "strategies") will be taught, if not learned. The bulk of a basal reading program consists of materials for teaching, practicing, and testing isolated reading "skills," reflecting an implicit assumption that reading is learned "a word, or sound, or a skill at a time." (p.70) The implication is that this broad *scope* of skills is both necessary and sufficient for learning to read. The *sequence* of skills is derived by moving from smaller parts toward larger wholes, beginning with and emphasizing skills for identifying words, and moving toward skills for comprehending sentences and paragraphs.
5. The basals control the language of the reading selections, particularly at the earliest levels, on the assumption that simplifying the vocabulary, sentence structure, and/or the letter/sound patterns in beginning materials will make them easier to read. Thus the basals include "simple" selections like "I can go. Can you go?" "I will help you. You can go." "Help! Help! I can not go." (p. 67; from Houghton Mifflin Reading, 1986, Level B—but the selection is typical of most basals.)

"The implication [in basal programs] is that this broad scope of skills is both necessary and sufficient for learning to read."

"Perhaps most damaging of all, the basal programs control...what counts as 'reading.'"

6. Perhaps most damaging of all, the basal programs control—along with standardized and state-mandated testing—what counts as "reading." The essence of the basal program is not the pupil anthologies and their reading selections, but rather the ancillary materials for teaching, practicing, and testing reading skills. In sheer bulk, these materials far outweigh the reading selections. Examination of these materials led the authors of the *Report Card* to estimate that a basal reading program engages children in reading literary and other texts only about 10 percent to 15 percent of the time that is ostensibly devoted to "reading" (p. 73). The ultimate reduction is in the basal tests, which reduce reading to the skills which can be easily measured with paper and pencil (p. 83). So "reading is not making sense of print anymore. It is doing well on the basal tests." (p. 108)

Are basal readers scientific?

Such strict control of reading makes perfectly good sense according to the science of the 1920s, when basal reading programs were first being developed. Today's basals are still solidly rooted in those principles from business, industry, and science—particularly behavioral psychology—that motivated the development of the earliest basal series. These principles are reflected in the "laws of learning" articulated by Edward Thorndike (Goodman *et al.*, 1988, pp. 12-13). The *Report Card* illustrates throughout its discussion of the contemporary basal how today's programs reflect the view of teaching and learning rooted in Thorndike's "laws." To summarize: "The *Law of Readiness* results in the readiness materials and in the tight sequence in which skill is built upon skill. The *Law of Exercise* produces drills and exercises in pupil books, workbooks, and supplemental materials. The *Law of Effect* supports the sequence of first learning words and skills and then using them in reading selections; and the *Law of Identical Elements* results in the focus on isolated skills in testing for development of reading ability and for the close match between the items in the exercises and the tests." (p. 98) Thus, from the viewpoint of the science upon which basal programs are based, strict control of teaching and learning and of what counts as "reading" is not only justifiable, but necessary.

But is this science the best that the late twentieth century has to offer? Both the authors of the *Report Card* and the members of NCTE's Commission on Reading would respond with a resounding "**No**!"

The newer science: a multidisciplinary concensus

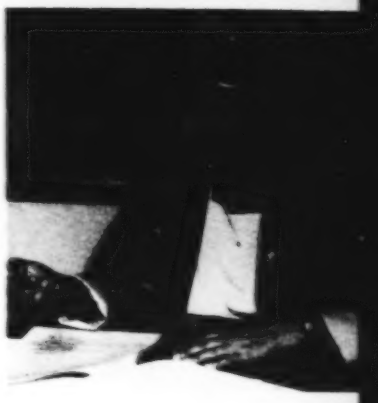
"...a multidisciplinary consensus has developed regarding the nature of learning...."

Within the past twenty or so years, a multidisciplinary consensus has developed regarding the nature of learning, the relationship between teaching and learning, the nature of the reading process, and the acquisition of literacy. (Space precludes listing most primary sources, but see such references as the following: Goodman, *et al.*; 1988, pp. 137-139; Weaver, 1988; Lindfors, 1987; Raphael and Reynolds, 1986; Smith, 1986; Teale and Sulzby, 1986; Crismore, 1985; Harste *et al.*, 1984; Newman, 1985; Pearson, 1984; Shuy, 1981; and Holdaway, 1979.) Converging research from cognitive psychology and schema theory and language acquisition, from linguistics and psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, and from reading and emergent literacy leads to conclusions such as the following:

1. From infancy, children actively develop, test, and refine hypotheses about their world. As preschoolers, for example, virtually all children learn to use their native language according to its basic rules, with feedback from the adults with whom they communicate but with almost no direct instruction whatsoever.

2. Reading is a highly complex and active process of meaning-seeking. Readers actively construct meaning as they interact with a text, and the meaning so constructed depends as much upon the prior knowledge and strategies of the reader as upon the words of the text.
3. Texts consisting of only a few simple words repeated in equally simple and stilted sentence patterns are typically less predictable and thus more difficult to read than texts consisting of a greater variety of words that occur in more natural sentence patterns resembling normal speech.
4. Both language and literacy develop best in the context of their use—that is, in situations which are functional and intrinsically motivational for learners. Children develop literacy best in an environment enriched with literature and "littered with literacy."
5. Learning to read is a process that develops over time, but in complex ways—not a skill or a strategy at a time, even when it is taught that way.

"Reading is a highly complex and active process of meaning-seeking."



Such well-documented observations as these suggest that reading is not best learned when taught as if it involved mastering a sequence of skills and strategies, from simple to increasingly complex. For many and perhaps most of our youth, teaching reading one skill at a time may in fact mitigate against their developing the ability to analyze, evaluate, and extend what they read, or to read well enough to solve everyday problems in adult life (*e.g.*, Venezky *et al.*, 1987, pp. 28, 44-46; Applebee *et al.*, 1987).

Although pupils may well benefit from the modeling and guided practice of certain skills and strategies, particularly strategies for getting meaning and for monitoring comprehension, they nevertheless do not need or necessarily benefit from an elaborate program that teaches isolated skills and strategies lesson-by-lesson, day-by-day, week-by-week, for seven or nine years. There is ample evidence that independent reading does considerably more to develop reading ability than all the workbooks and practice sheets children typically complete in a basal reading program (*e.g.*, Anderson *et al.* 1985, pp. 75-76).

I shall risk going further than the *Report Card* and admit that I think it questionable whether basal reading systems as a genre can go very far towards meeting this basic objection to teaching reading as a long, drawn-out process of mastering a sequence of skills and strategies. After all, basals are a product of the American economy, in which profit is the bottom line. One way for basal publishers to increase profit is by enlarging their share of the market, but another and perhaps more practical way is to increase the sheer volume of materials in a basal reading program, especially the consumable materials that have to be replaced every year.

This is not to say that the authors and editors of basals are either ignorant of the newer knowledge base, or unscrupulous; typically they are neither, and in fact there is considerable truth to the argument that publishers are only providing the kinds of materials that the market demands. Furthermore, the latest series often do reflect some aspects of the newer understanding in philosophy statements in the teachers' manuals, as well as in certain other aspects of instruction. Nevertheless, it seems clear that it is in the *publishers'* best interests to *increase* the volume of materials for teaching, practicing, and assessing reading skills and strategies, not to decrease them. However, scientific evidence from a convergence of disciplines in the last two decades or more suggests that increasing the use of such materials is certainly *not* in the best interests of *children*.

~ ~ ~

An Attack on Basal Readers for the Wrong Reasons

by Patrick Groff

The *Report Card on Basal Readers* (RC) was prepared by the National Council of Teachers of English's Commission on Reading in response to its obvious dislike of what it calls "the absolute dominance of basal readers" (BRs) in today's reading instruction programs (p. iv). The report admits in its preface that it takes an "advocate's position" against the use of basal readers in our nation's classrooms. The *Report Card* thus gives an early warning that the document is not the report of a neutral-minded study of the effectiveness of BRs. To the contrary, the *Report Card* appears to be the result of comparison by its authors of their peculiar convictions about reading instruction with the methods for this purpose recommended by the BRs.

It is rightly judged by the *Report Card* that these two points of view on the teaching of reading are incompatible. The BR system stands in the way of the implementation of their conceptions about reading teaching, the authors of the RC appear to have concluded. The report was written, then, to persuade teachers, reading experts, or anyone else with influence over how reading is taught in schools, to join in the effort to eliminate basal readers from the schools.

"The exaggerated charges made against basals... are useful warnings for critical readers of this document...."

False charges against basal readers

Expectations given readers early on by the RC that it will be a passionate endorsement of certain articles of faith about reading instruction, rather than an open-minded examination of the effectiveness of BRs, are quickly fulfilled by the document. It argues in its first chapter that the "central premise of the basal reader" is that even teachers who are otherwise incompetent will be able to teach all children to read well if they use the basal reader (p. 1). The RC maintains that BRs say that "everything" a child needs to read in order to perfect this skill is found in the readers. So students' and teachers' performances are judged entirely by basal tests, the report concludes.

None of these allegations against the typical basal reader is accurate, however. It would be patently absurd, of course, for BRs to be so outlandishly boastful about their capabilities and influence. BRs do claim, it is true, that they can teach children at large to read better than can any other system of instruction that is presently available. This presumption is a far cry, however, from what the *Report Card* avers that BRs profess in their own behalf.

The exaggerated charges made against basals by the report in its first chapter are useful warnings for critical readers of this document, nonetheless, since they alert the critic in yet another way that the RC was conceived and written as a piece of special pleading for a peculiar opinion of how reading ability should be developed. The overstatements made about BRs in chapter one of the report thus caution anyone to read the document with his or her guard up.

The central issue about the RC

The RC is correct, nonetheless, in protesting the BR's claim that everything it presents in its various books and manuals is there "for scien-

tific reasons." (p. 1) There is other reasonable doubt, which I share, that "findings from research have not been the most compelling force behind changes that have occurred in basal reader programs." (Durkin, 1987, p. 335) Implicit in the report's statement that BRs "have not reflected the best and most up-to-date knowledge of science" (p. 31), is the claim that everything in the reading instruction program it favors is based on a preponderance of scientific evidence, however.

A more pertinent and manageable question is: Given the likelihood that basal readers can and should be improved, are their shortcomings less or more significant than are those found in the reading program the *Report Card* advocates? This question will become the crux of my critique of the report. The vital issue for any critical reader of the RC thus is: Is it more or less likely that the reading program that it proposes will bring on greater achievement in reading for children than can the typical basal system?

"Given the likelihood that basal readers... should be improved, are their shortcomings less or more significant than are those found in the reading program the Report Card advocates?"

Why the RC objects to basal readers

Before moving to a direct confrontation of this issue, however, it seems proper first to comment on the major reasons, other than the supposed ineffectiveness of BRs, why the RC denounces their use. The report dislikes how the ethos of business, science, and psychology of the day is reflected in the manner in which the BR is written, how in effect the basals try to maintain scientific management in the teaching of reading. As to the effectiveness of this relationship, the RC admits that "basal reading materials met the expectations of a public and profession enthralled with business, science, and psychology as they tried to find a remedy for the apparent crisis in reading instruction." (p. 19) Nonetheless, the RC castigates even the fine-tuning of basal programs over the years that has been done in accordance with changes in the ethos of business, science, and psychology.

On the other hand, the continuous reformations in the content of basals have much impressed teachers—so much so, that in popularity referendums teachers are found to approve wholeheartedly of the series' self-proclaimed values (Shannon, 1983). It is clear, then, that most of today's teachers simply do not believe the senior author of the RC's contention that the use of basals results in "detrimental effects on students' desire and ability to read." (p. 24) Whether teachers truly should have such faith in the RC plan will be discussed in due course.

Having failed to document that there is any widespread lack of confidence among teachers as to the relative effectiveness of BRs versus the RC plan for teaching reading, the report maintains, nonetheless, that the favorable judgments of basals by teachers are the result of teachers' general unawareness that in so doing they are acting unprofessionally. If teachers became professional-minded, the RC bluntly contends, they would reject the use of BRs. The RC argues, then, that teachers who accept its heterodoxical point of view about reading instruction are professionals. Those who do otherwise, are not. It must be noted that this remarkable denunciation of teachers who disagree with it is made by the RC before it presents any evidence that the plan its authors recommend for teaching is actually superior to that which the BRs offer. This RC criticism of teachers also overlooks the evidence that in fact they may not be slavish adherents of basals (Durkin, 1984; Russavage *et al.*, 1985).

It is reasonable at this point to refer to descriptions of highly successful reading programs to determine if the teachers involved in them are professional by the RC standards. It is clear that even the most eminently accomplished reading teachers in such programs (Hoffman and Rutherford,

1984) do not meet the criteria set by the RC for professionalism. Hoffman and Rutherford analyzed reports on eight reading programs that had attained relatively high pupil achievement to identify the key elements of teacher practices, instructional programming, and school environment that they had in common. The teachers in these outstanding reading programs did not conform to several of the recommendations made for instruction by the RC. Who is truly out of step in this regard, then, America's outstanding teachers or the authors of the RC? The RC cannot say it respects these teachers' "exercise of professional judgment" (p. 153), and at the same time accuse them of unprofessional practices because their teaching does not confirm the RC proposal for reading instruction. This would be a grossly inconsistent judgment.

BRs and teacher effectiveness

The first part of the *Report Card* proposes, then, what it assumes is a logical syllogism about teacher effectiveness. This deduction goes like this: a) BRs persuade instructors to teach reading in a relatively ineffectual manner; b) teachers internalize the seductive rhetoric about the capacities of BRs; and c) teachers then use and defend an inferior mode of reading instruction. In this supposedly wrongful instruction, speech sounds, letters, and words are isolated. Children are taught to recognize words out of context. The RC vehemently opposes such "fracturing and narrowing" of the language (p. 82).

"Reading programs...which teach a controlled, carefully sequenced, hierarchical order of skills and words...produce the greatest amount of reading achievement that is possible."

Is such teaching at odds with the research findings, as the RC insists? It appears not. Reviews of the research (*e.g.*, Chall, 1967 and 1983; Johnson and Baumann, 1984; Anderson *et al.*, 1985; Perfetti, 1985; Groff, 1987) suggest that reading programs that teach in this fashion – and which teach a controlled, carefully sequenced, hierarchical order of skills and words – produce the greatest amount of reading achievement that is possible. Drill and practice with words is carried on in such programs to the point of overlearning, so that pupils learn to decode words effortlessly and accurately (automatically). Teachers in these superior reading programs expect that pupils' learning will be a direct result of their teaching, and they are not disappointed.

The RC strenuously disapproves of this kind of teaching, however. It goes so far as to concur with Smith (1973) that one of the easy ways to make learning to read hard is to ensure that phonics skills are learned and used by children. But not so, say the many reviews of the experimental research on the value of phonics teaching. In my identification of 120 such reviews, I found they all agree that the acquisition of phonics skills by learners makes a vital contribution to their reading development (Groff, 1987). "The research is clear," says the recent *Handbook on Reading Research*, "if you want to improve word-identification ability, teach phonics." (Johnson and Baumann, 1984, p. 595) A key factor found commonly in schools with extraordinarily successful reading programs is that they all teach phonics "to a much greater degree than most." (Weber, 1983, p. 545)

Neither does the *Report Card's* proposition that children cannot be "active learners" of reading if they carry out assignments overtly directed by their teachers (p. 126) have significant corroboration from the experimental research. Typically the empirical findings about teaching support Berliner and Rosenshine's (1977, p. 393) conclusion that "the classroom behavior of the successful teacher is characterized by direct instruction, whereby students are brought into contact with the curriculum materials and are kept in contact with them until the requisite knowledge is acquired." An acceptance

of the RC's notion that children learn only under their own initiatives thus cannot be a necessary condition of professionalism in teaching.

It is not altogether clear from the RC how teachers who become liberated from the BRs might express their newly acquired authority. Apparently, teachers with freshly gained dominion over reading programs firmly in hand would not be expected to do any direct instruction, teach any given set of reading skills or vocabulary, provide any individual pupil practice materials like worksheets, follow any common methodology or procedures from class to class, externally control to any significant extent the strategies children have found it useful to become consciously aware of when learning to read (metacognition), or regularly test children using normative measures. If children are given "the opportunity to learn for themselves" (p. 130), they would have teachers who "respond to what the child is trying to do" (p. 129), by encouraging him or her "to take risks in reading," that is, to guess at the identity of words by using context cues (p. 130).

The unsoundness of context cues

It may be, however, that the most potentially hazardous item in the list of practices that research has failed to corroborate is maintaining children at the guessing-at-words or context cue stage of word recognition. The RC makes clear its approval of the idea that "it makes sense to have children behaving like skilled readers to the fullest extent possible from the beginning." (p. 130) With this belief in focus, it is puzzling, then, why the RC persists in its denunciations of the BR's view "that learning to read is, more than anything else, learning words and skills for identifying words" (p. 66) rather than learning to use context cues.

"It may be...that the most potentially hazardous item in the list of practices that research has failed to corroborate is maintaining children at the guessing-at-words or context cue state of word recognition."

I have surveyed the research on the facilitating effect of context cues on word recognition and comprehension (Groff and Seymour, 1987). The research findings on these topics suggest that it remains an open question (at the very best) whether context has any effect on mature reading behavior. Henderson (1982, p. 345) believes the research reveals that "there are good grounds for disputing whether any facilitatory effect of sentence context obtains if the task closely resembles normal reading." Studies show that there is no greater difference between good and poor readers' abilities to recognize words in sentence contexts than in isolation. By the time they are third graders, children do not make significantly fewer errors when reading words in contexts than as isolated items. Eye movement studies indicate that good readers normally fixate their eyes on three or four words per second. When individual words can be recognized so automatically, it is unlikely that the able reader needs to spend time guessing at their identity in context.

Teaching children to continue to use context cues runs the risk of maintaining young readers at this crude level of word recognition and thus of hindering their overall reading growth. As Gough (1981, p. 95) correctly depicts the issue: "Goodman [senior author of the RC] is dead wrong about what separates the skilled adult from the beginning reader, and hence what must be accomplished in reading acquisition. The most conspicuous difference between good and poor readers is found in the swift and accurate recognition of individual words, in decoding, and the mastery of this skill is at the heart of reading acquisition." The research, as Gough notes, devastates a main plank of the RC reading program – that it is vital to teach numerous context cues to children learning to read. With this main section of its proposed methodology reduced to shambles, the RC's goal of settling "what is good or bad for learners" (p. v) is notably frustrated.

Summary

The *Report Card on Basal Readers* is a legitimate document in the sense that its main purpose is to create dissatisfactions on the part of teachers toward the methods of instruction they commonly use. That is, it would be foolhardy to argue that BRs now teach reading totally in accordance with what the empirical research says about this instruction. Moreover, there doubtless never will be a point in time when teachers will be able to say with confidence that a faultless or irreproachable stage in the evolution toward perfection in instruction has been reached.

"Change and progress in the manner in which reading instruction is customarily given, including teacher dissatisfaction with it,...should be nourished...."

Large numbers of reading professionals have devoted their efforts over the years to promoting reading reform under the assumption that the state of the art in reading instruction can be steadily improved. Change and progress in the manner in which reading instruction is customarily given, including teacher dissatisfaction with it, thus should be nourished, not suppressed. One cannot find fault, therefore, with the apparent basic motives of the authors of the RC. It should be conceded that their goal in producing this document was to improve the manner in which reading is taught in school and, through this means, reduce the degree of illiteracy in the nation. Nonetheless, as noted in the body of this discussion, serious questions can be raised about the recommendations the RC makes for teaching reading, inquiries that go beyond the fundamental objectives of its authors in writing the book.

As is admitted by its authors, the RC was conceived and written as a means of popularizing the particular approach to reading instruction that was favored, at the time of the publication of the RC, by the Commission on Reading of the National Council of Teachers of English. The analysis I have made of the contents of the RC reveals, however, that the radical plan for teaching reading that the RC advocates has basic shortcomings. By attempting to defend a predetermined point of view about reading instruction, rather than to examine, in a disinterested way, both sides of the debate over this teaching that continues to boil over, the authors of the RC also show more commitment to ideology than to the scientific method.

The prime fault of the special pleading for a particular approach to the teaching of reading found in the RC is that the document fails to provide any convincing evidence that an implementation of the RC plan for reading development will result in greater reading achievement for children than is possible with BR systems. From most accounts of research (Chall, 1967 and 1983; Johnson and Baumann, 1984; Anderson *et al.*, 1985; Perfetti, 1985; Groff, 1987), it can be inferred that a use of the RC approach in fact would eventuate in less reading development for children than is attainable with BRs.

This is not to say that the RC has not accurately exposed some essential weaknesses of the BR system. It is true, for example, that the basal readers' claim that they scrupulously follow the research evidence when these books are written is not altogether accurate. It is also correct to charge, as the RC does, that BRs spend too much time on activities other than having children read independently. One can find basal lessons and tests that do not accomplish all their teachers' manuals claim they do. BRs do exemplify the difficulty of creating stories with high literary quality that are easy enough for beginners to read.

I recently examined how phonics is taught in grades 1 and 2 in five leading BRs. I found that pupils who used these books would not be fully

prepared to decode about 60 percent of the new words presented in BR lessons (Groff, 1988). The BRs thus are also guilty of not teaching phonics intensively enough, and of using the analytic, implicit approach to word recognition which teaches about sight words and context cues. BRs present a less than desirable sequence of phonics skills, a discredited syllabication procedure, and too little practice on vowel phoneme-grapheme correspondences. They also tend to ignore the evidence that multisyllabic words are significantly more difficult to recognize than are monosyllabic ones. It was striking to realize that the errors the BRs make in teaching doubtless cause some unfortunate side effects. With BRs, children's acquisition of automatic decoding skills are delayed. Their ability, in turn, to read independently from a wide variety of sources is handicapped.

"BRs present a less than desirable sequence of phonics skills, a discredited syllabication procedure, and too little practice on vowel phoneme-grapheme correspondences."

By its own admission, the RC thinks few of these faults of the BR have any consequential importance. It holds that any straightforward kind of phonics instruction will handicap the attainment by children of independent reading skills, and thus that "exercises designed to teach phonics and vocabulary directly are likely to be unnecessary and even counterproductive." (Goodman, NCTE, 1986, p. 359) The loyalty of the authors of the RC to such immoderate and unreasonable views of reading development drastically reduces the chances that the type of reading instruction it espouses will find widespread acceptance by reading teachers. In the final analysis, therefore, the RC tends to be self-defeating. It frequently battles against the BRs for wrong reasons, and thus blunts the thrust of the accurate exposé it makes of many of their shortcomings.

~ ~ ~

Constance Weaver: Response to Groff

Before responding to Groff's opening statement and moving beyond, I should like to point out that the *Report Card on Basal Readers* was written *for*, rather than by, the NCTE's Commission on Reading, a clarification which is being made in the second printing. Nevertheless, I think it safe to say that most if not all members of the Commission on Reading share the authors' broad concerns about basal readers.

In his opening statement, Groff claims that "The *Report Card* admits in its preface that it takes an 'advocate's position' against the use of basal readers in our classrooms." However, the phrase "advocate's position" actually occurs in *the following* context and sentence in the preface to the *Report Card*: "The concern of the Commission [on Reading] is with the promotion of literacy in the United States. Toward that end the *Report Card on Basal Readers* takes an advocate's position in favor of students and teachers." (Goodman *et al.*, 1988, p. iv) Groff's rendition is considerably different from what the authors have actually said, contributing to the impression that Groff is attempting to discredit the *Report Card* as an extremist document rather than to respond to its criticisms of basal readers with solid argument and convincing evidence.

"Perhaps Groff has had no greater success than other scholars in locating solid comparative research."

Comparative research of the experimental kind

In an attempt to be more substantive, however, Groff asks what he claims is the crux of his criticism of the *Report Card*: "Given the likelihood that basal readers can and should be improved, are their shortcomings less or more significant than are those found in the reading program the *Report Card* advocates?" He continues: "Is it more or less likely that the reading program that it proposes will bring on greater achievement in reading for children than can the typical basal system?" These questions lead one to expect that Groff will offer research comparing basal reading programs with what he considers to be the reading program that the *Report Card* proposes. However, he does not.

Perhaps Groff has had no greater success than other scholars in locating solid comparative research. Chall, for example, admitted in her 1967 investigation of various approaches to reading that previous summaries based on practically the same body of experimental research had arrived at conflicting conclusions and that practically none of the studies satisfied all her conditions for solid research (Chall, 1967, pp. 100-101). One of the most crucial difficulties was that most studies did not specify clearly what an instructional "method" actually involved.

In Chall's 1983 update of *The Great Debate*, she says that between 1967 and 1981, there was scarcely any research either to support or to challenge her earlier conclusions about the comparative research: "the hope that coordinated studies would avoid uncertainties in [earlier] results did not materialize." (Chall, 1983, p. 7)

It would appear that Groff has been no more successful in locating solid, much less recent and definitive, experimental research comparing the effectiveness of various approaches to the development of literacy. Yet Groff apparently hopes the reader will succumb to his rhetoric rather than scrutinize his argument and notice the absence of the comparative evidence that his opening paragraphs seem to promise.

The Report Card advocates improvement and alternatives—not one program

In any case, Groff would have had another problem in locating research that compares the effectiveness of basal readers and of "the reading program that the *Report Card* advocates," for in fact *the* Report Card *does not advocate any program*!

The authors sketch several alternatives "within and without the basals" (pp. 133-143), but they do not advocate any particular program—nor, certainly, do they advocate the elimination of basal readers from the schools, as Groff inaccurately charges.

Rather, what the authors of the *Report Card* offer (more sketchily than I would like) is some indication of the multidisciplinary research consensus that they (we) believe provides a more solid foundation for teaching reading than Thorndike's laws of learning from the 1920s—a newer research base that might logically be drawn upon in improving basal reading systems and that already is reflected in certain alternative programs and, to some degree, in certain basal programs, particularly Canadian. Thus, although the *Report Card* recommends no program *per se*, certainly there are programs which are more congruent with the research cited than are the six basal reading programs that have captured most of the market in the U.S.

"...certainly there are programs which are more congruent with the research cited than are the six basal reading programs that have captured most of the market in the U.S."

Groff does not cite, however, any research comparing the typical basal reading programs with such programs based on the newer multidisciplinary research to support his implication that the basal reader systems will be more effective.

What he does cite in some detail are summaries of experimental studies of reading skills, most notably phonics skills. This discussion is relevant to a critique of basals, because insofar as there is any research supporting the skills orientation of the basal reading programs, it is typically empirical, experimental research on phonics and other word identification skills, or isolated comprehension skills; some of the more recent research focuses on direct instruction of these skills. Therefore, although we both may *seem* to digress from the issue of basal readers, a discussion of the faults and limitations of the kind of research Groff cites is nevertheless in order.

Teaching and learning are not the same: an example from language acquisition

Groff gives most attention to the teaching of phonics. Indicating that he has examined 120 reviews of the experimental research on the value of phonics teaching, he then claims that "they all agree that the acquisition of phonics skills by learners makes a vital contribution to their reading development." But the *teaching* of phonics is not the same as the *learning* or acquisition of phonics, as Groff would apparently have us believe. Children can acquire the phonics knowledge needed for effective reading without intensively or explicitly studying phonics; all that most children need is assistance in making letter/sound connections as they write and read.

"...children learn the basic rules of their native language by about age five, and with virtually no direct instruction whatsoever in those rules."

In this regard, research on the acquisition of language is particularly instructive. By observing children and the interaction between them and significant others in their environment, researchers have concluded that children learn the basic rules of their native language by about age five, and with virtually no direct instruction whatsoever in those rules (*e.g.*, Lindfors, 1987). Let us take as an example a rule that relates to both meaning and sound, the rule for making regular verbs past tense. To make the verb *like*

past tense, for instance, we add a /t/ sound. To make the verb *love* past tense, we add a /d/ sound. If we try this with other regular verbs, we find that they all add a /t/ or a /d/ sound, unless the base form ends in one of these sounds. The *rule* is when a regular verb (other than one ending in /t/ or /d/) ends in a voiceless consonant, it adds a /t/; otherwise, it adds a /d/.

Most children master this basic rule by about the age of five (Berko, 1958); yet only an infinitesimally small number of adults could verbalize the rule—and even if they could, how could they teach children to use the rule? Or how could children consciously apply it? This would be something like trying to teach the centipede to become aware of how it moves all its legs; functional *dyspedagogia* (pun intended) would surely be the result.

Of course, many school age children could probably learn to recognize the rule on multiple choice or matching tests, and indeed this kind of response is all too often taken as evidence that children have "learned" something. But on the one hand, recognition or even intellectual understanding of the rule would not necessarily enable anyone to use it, while on the other hand, children begin to show evidence of developing the rule long before the age of five, when they have virtually mastered it!

"...most children develop phonics knowledge through frequent opportunities to read and to write."

More generally, "knowing about" something does not guarantee "knowing how" to do or use it, while "knowing how" often does not require "knowing about." The same applies to phonics. While every educator and researcher I know—including the senior author of the *Report Card* (Goodman, 1973)—agrees that readers need a functional command of basic letter/ sound relationships, many also recognize that this need does not necessarily require that children study phonics in a formal way, skill after skill, worksheet after worksheet.

Doing phonics exercises is not the same as using phonics

In discussing phonics, then, Groff seems to make several assumptions that are untenable, given the research into how language and literacy are acquired. First, Groff apparently assumes that learning phonics requires that teachers teach it directly, one step at a time. This assumption ignores the ample evidence that most children develop phonics knowledge through frequent opportunities to read and to write. For example, Harste (1985) has observed that children who are encouraged to spell words "as best they can" in early writings will soon exhibit more sophisticated letter/sound knowledge in their writings than that required by the phonics worksheets that the children often seemingly cannot do (p. 8:27). Also, children often exhibit in the reading of meaningful texts a more sophisticated grasp of phonics patterns than that required by worksheets that they cannot do (Watson and Crowley, 1988, pp. 263-265). In fact, part of the research that Groff is ignoring in calling for even more intensive phonics instruction is the research demonstrating that many children cannot do skill exercises—especially phonics exercises—very well even though they can read. Consequently, children who are competent at comprehending what they read are all too often considered underachievers or even reading failures simply because they do not do well at skills work (*e.g.*, Carbo, 1987a and 1987b). Indeed, such undervaluing of children's reading ability is typical of basal reading programs, because they implicitly reflect the erroneous assumption that children must be able to demonstrate skills in isolation in order to use them effectively during real reading.

"...we do not, of course, mean that teachers do nothing to facilitate the acquisition of such knowledge."

When we say that children develop functional phonics knowledge by reading and writing meaningful texts we do not, of course, mean that teachers do nothing to facilitate the acquisition of such knowledge. This is

apparently another of Groff's assumptions: that either teachers teach phonics lesson-by-isolated-lesson, or they do nothing. But this is simply not true. Teachers facilitate the development of phonics knowledge by helping children make the connections between letters and sounds as they write, and by focusing their attention on the most productive letter/sound cues as they read. (McKenzie, 1986, gives practical examples.) Thus direct instruction is mostly incorporated within or meaningfully related to the reading and writing that the children are doing. Of course, some children need and receive more of such assistance than others.

Emphasis on "the most productive letter/sound cues" is significant, relating to another of Groff's mistaken assumptions. When examining how phonics is taught in grades 1 and 2 of five leading basal reading series, he found that the phonics instruction would not fully prepare students to decode about 60 percent of the new words presented in the basal reader lessons. Groff's *non sequitur* is to conclude that "The basal readers thus are guilty of not teaching phonics intensively enough."

Using context and prior knowledge too

Groff's conclusion cited just above implies that at least beginning readers can and should focus just on letter/sound cues to meaning and to identifying words. However, this makes reading as difficult as possible. A wealth of evidence demonstrates that readers normally use prior knowledge and all of the kinds of context available to them to make sense of print and even to identify words. As a brief example, take the sentence "Johnny put on his pajamas and climbed into __." Prior knowledge and context would lead most children to predict the word *bed*, and thus in this simple case it would scarcely be necessary even to process the initial consonant *b* to determine that the word is *bed*.

"...readers normally use prior knowledge and all of the kinds of context available to them to make sense of print and even to identify words."

Despite the experimental research Groff cites to downplay the importance of context in identifying words, the preponderance of research in the past two decades indicates that using prior knowledge and context are absolutely crucial in reading for meaning (see, for instance, references cited earlier as giving rise to and reflecting the newer multidisciplinary consensus about reading; see also Smith, 1971, 1978, 1982; 1973; and Goodman, 1973.)

Even (or perhaps especially) children who are just beginning to learn to read will naturally make use of all the knowledge and language cues at their command – unless they have been persuaded not to do so as a result of the limited and limiting skills programs of the kind that Groff apparently advocates. We make learning to read unnecessarily difficult for beginners with such skills programs. This, in fact, is one of the *Report Card*'s major objections to basal programs.

I should perhaps note in passing, however, that it is emphatically not true, as Groff claims, that "a main plank of the RC program" is "that it is vital to teach numerous context cues to children learning to read." Certainly this idea could never be found in, or even reasonably inferred from, the *Report Card on Basal Readers*. The idea of teaching numerous kinds of context cues for recognizing words would be as rigorously rejected by the authors of the *Report Card* as the idea of teaching numerous skills of any other sort.

The teaching of phonics

In short, then, Groff's rhetoric seems riddled with assumptions that are invalidated by recent research into how people read meaningful text in natural situations and by research into how children develop literacy. Even

other phonics advocates do not seem to agree with Groff's argument that the teaching of phonics should be increased in basal reading systems. For example, the authors of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (which included Jeanne Chall as a contributor) see phonics instruction as playing a very limited (though in their view, important) role in beginning reading instruction. They indicate, for example, that a number of phonics programs try to teach too many letter/sound relationships, leading to the conclusion that much of today's phonics instruction is probably unnecessary and unproductive (Anderson *et al.*, 1985, pp. 38-43). This conclusion can be inferred from various lines of evidence, including research into the nature and reliability of phonics generalizations themselves (*e.g.*, Clymer, 1963), as well as the lines of evidence referred to above. (See Weaver, 1988, pp. 402-404 for a summary, and Chapter 3 of that book for more of the evidence.)

"...it is Groff rather than the authors of the Report Card who is expressing 'peculiar convictions' and indulging in 'special pleading'...."

Since even supporters of phonics instruction do not generally concur with Groff's call for greater emphasis on phonics instruction, one may reasonably contend, then, that it is Groff rather than the authors of the *Report Card* who is expressing "peculiar convictions" and indulging in "special pleading for a peculiar opinion of how reading ability should be developed." Certainly it is not Groff's view of research but the emergent multidisciplinary consensus that is increasingly reflected in professional journals and books, and in the programs of such professional bodies as the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association.

An alternative to the limitations of experimental research

Considering Groff's lack of treatment of such a large body of research, then, it is particularly ironic to find him claiming that the authors of the *Report Card on Basal Readers* "show more commitment to ideology than to the scientific method." Let us be honest, Dr. Groff: the authors of the *Report Card* and you and I are all responsible scholars, attempting to share our vision of the truth as we understand it, given the science that we value.

And therein lies, I think, the crux of the issue: the kinds of science that we value. Groff is obviously committed to experimental science, the kind that usually seeks to manipulate or change one variable while carefully controlling others, in order to determine the effect of the "dependent" variable. What Groff fails to acknowledge, if not to realize, is that this classical paradigm has been severely challenged, beginning early in the twentieth century, by quantum physicists. (See discussions by Kuhn, 1962; Capra, 1982; and Weaver, 1985.)

Quantum physicists came to realize that the researcher cannot help but affect the nature of what is observed. This is of course particularly true in classroom research, in which the significant variables are practically impossible to isolate and control; however, it is also true, to a lesser extent, of the "laboratory" research of the kind that Groff cites: experimental research that typically isolates various aspects of reading from the contexts in which reading normally takes place. Researchers have become aware of the effect of expectations and of experimental design upon the outcomes of research studies—the placebo and Rosenthal and Hawthorne effects.

"...there has emerged in various disciplines a new scientific paradigm."

Because of these and other limitations upon experimental research, the only kind that Groff apparently acknowledges as "scientific," there has emerged in various disciplines a new scientific paradigm. Recognizing that even so-called objective research is necessarily tainted by the intervention or observation of the investigator, this newer breed of researcher has in effect embraced this limitation, turning it into a virtue. Thus rather than confining

themselves to manipulating variables and measuring relatively limited factors and objectives (limited because of the need for control), researchers in many disciplines, including reading education, have turned to more naturalistic, ethnographic research.

Much of the comparative research stemming from the newer research paradigm is similar to experimental research in comparing one child's beginning-of-year abilities with the child's end-of-year abilities, one class's progress or achievement with the teacher's own previous classes, or one classroom's progress with another's. Though the research is sometimes quasi-experimental, often it is more observational and interactive; and it includes numerous case studies, on an individual and whole class scale. Nowadays, many of the researchers are the teachers themselves—the people "in the trenches" with the children day-to-day. Often, outside (usually university) researchers become part of the class, as it were, deliberately allowing themselves to affect the outcome (*e.g.*, Harste, 1988. Also, many of the research studies are to be cited in a bibliography by Diane Stephens at the Center for the Study of Reading and Trika Smith-Burke of New York University.)

Ethnographic research indicates how children develop language and literacy

What such researchers have observed, for example, is how children acquire the basic structure and words of their native language in their earliest years, virtually without any instruction at all in the rules, and how the natural acquisition of literacy in many crucial ways parallels the acquisition of language. (For a brief summary, see the introduction to the *Bookshelf* program, 1986, imported from Australia by Scholastic.) Such researchers have also observed that the functional use of literacy skills is better facilitated through real reading and writing than through the isolated teaching of skills, and that reading and writing enhance one another. (See especially the introductory chapter in Newman, 1985, and Chapter 7 in Weaver, 1988; see also Hansen *et al.*, 1985; Hansen, 1987; and Jaggar and Smith-Burke, 1985; Stephens and Smith-Burke are also preparing a research bibliography in which these relationships are central.)

"...the functional use of literacy skills is better facilitated through real reading and writing than through the isolated teaching of skills...."

The most interesting and informative example I know comes from research on children's writing development, rather than reading development. In a significant article titled "When Children Want to Punctuate: Basic Skills Belong in Context," researcher Lucy Calkins (1980) reported a study which compared the approaches to learning punctuation that were adopted in two third-grade classrooms. In one classroom, the teacher taught language mechanics through daily drills and workbook exercises. "'Everything that is in the book, I do a whole lesson on it,'" the teacher explained. She gave pretests and posttests. Her children rarely wrote. In the other class, the children didn't study punctuation from workbooks or dittos; nor apparently did they take pretests and posttests on the punctuation marks. Instead they wrote and, in the process, learned to use the punctuation marks needed to make their meaning clear and the marks necessary to indicate editing changes.

The result? At the end of the school year, Calkins interviewed all the children in each class to determine what they knew about punctuation. The children who studied punctuation day after day could explain, on the average, only 3.83 marks of punctuation, typically by reciting the rules they had learned. In contrast, the children who had written instead of studying punctuation could explain, on the average, 8.66 marks of punctuation, usually not by reciting memorized rules but by explaining or demonstrating how

the marks were used in their own writing. This study strongly indicates that skills develop best in context.

Similar studies of reading skills and reading have begun to appear also. For example, when Gunderson and Shapiro (1987, 1988) compared the achievement of children in two first-grade classrooms using a whole language program (a program reflecting the newer research base) with a published basal reading program, they found that the children in the whole language program learned as much about phonic relationships and vocabulary as was taught in the basal program. And when Ribowsky (1986) compared the effects of a code emphasis approach versus a whole language approach upon emergent literacy in kindergartners, she found that the children in the whole language group demonstrated greater ability in phonetic analysis and language skills and that overall, the whole language approach was far more effective in developing literacy than the code emphasis approach.

What emerges clearly from the newer research base of ethnographic and sometimes quasi-experimental studies is that children develop literacy more fully by spending more time reading and writing and less time on skills work—and there is an increasing body of evidence suggesting that children learn and *use* the skills better that way, too, particularly when they are given whatever time they need to develop those skills (with teacher and peer assistance, of course), rather than being locked into an arbitrary timetable for instruction and assessment.

"Ability to read" is different from "reading achievement"

Of course, one may wonder why anyone would be concerned with testing reading and writing skills isolated from their daily use. However, this is how reading and writing "achievement" are all too typically measured—reading especially.

Thus when Groff cites experimental research that he claims supports intensive phonics instruction, it is notable that he is at least honest about what it might accomplish: he never claims that such instruction will enhance children's ability to read, but only that it will have a positive effect upon "reading achievement." Reading achievement, of course, is whatever is tested by the assessment instruments used with children: usually basal reader tests or standardized or state-mandated tests, or sometimes researcher-devised tests. Almost always, what is tested is comprised of skills of some sort—phonics and other word-identification skills, and comprehension skills that are presumed, but certainly not proven, to underlie the more complex comprehension processes (Rosenshine, 1980). "Reading achievement," then, is usually measured by and equated with how well students do on the isolated skills that can be easily measured with pencil and paper (and nowadays, scored by computer).

"Reading achievement...is usually measured by...how well students do on the isolated skills that can be easily measured...."

However, "reading achievement" certainly cannot be equated with the ability to read with comprehension a variety of materials in naturalistic settings. This blithe equation is the sort of reductionism justly criticized by the *Report Card on Basal Readers*: the tendency to reduce "reading" to what can be easily measured on paper-and-pencil tests; that is, to treat "reading achievement" and "reading" as if they were the same. For valuable critiques of standardized testing, see Langer and Pradl (1984), Wilson (1985), Farr and Carey (1986), Bussis and Chittenden (1987), Carbo (1988), Valencia and Pear-

son (1987), and Wixon *et al.* (1987). These all clarify the point that reading and "reading achievement" are by no means the same.

Fortunately, the states of Michigan and Illinois have moved away from the testing of word identification and comprehension skills (see the last three references above), and the National Assessment of Educational Progress has been attempting to assess readers' ability to construct meaning from various kinds of texts, rather than the ability to demonstrate mastery of isolated skills (NAEP, 1987). These are steps in the right direction; but in making instructional decisions about children's abilities and needs, we should place less emphasis upon such standardized tests and more emphasis upon the informal but nonetheless systematic kinds of observations that only teachers and researchers in the classroom can make. (For such assessment instruments, see, for example, Y. Goodman, Watson, and Burke, 1987, and Goodman, Goodman, and Hood, 1988. David Bloome at the University of Massachusetts is also preparing a publication on observational assessment.)

What, then, of Groff's claim (he cites Chall, 1967 and 1983) that reading programs "which teach a controlled, carefully sequenced, hierarchical order of skills and words produce the greatest amount of reading achievement that is possible?" Some of the newer ethnographic and quasi-experimental research cited above suggests that this often may not be true, but even if it is, is such "reading achievement"necessarily what we are, or should be, striving for?

"...is such 'reading achievement' necessarily what we are, or should be, striving for?"

It is noteworthy that even those research studies and summaries that purport to show the superiority of a *code-emphasis approach* (Chall's term) show limited effects. When they report, for example, that early elementary children drilled on phonics do well on reading achievement tests, they show little if any advantage beyond the fourth or sixth grade (Chall, 1967, 1983; Bond and Dykstra, 1967; Dykstra, 1974; Anderson *et al.*, 1985). Meanwhile, there are other kinds of evidence that the actual reading ability of many children is grossly underestimated by such tests, while the reading ability of others may be seriously overestimated (*e.g.*, Combs *et al.*, 1988; Carbo, 1987a; Goodman, 1973). And clearly we are not succeeding in developing the literacy of many of our young people to the extent and in the ways needed for adult life.

Long-range goals and minimum skills objectives

We need, I think, to step outside the narrow paradigm reflected and perpetuated by basal reading programs, standardized tests, and experimental research, to reflect upon our *long-range goals for literacy*, and then to consider how these can best be attained. To phrase it rather abstractly, I assume we want to develop the kind of literacy that will enable our young people to become effective citizens and consumers and contributors to their own and society's economic well-being, as well as the kind of literacy that will enrich their lives as human beings.

"We need...to step outside the narrow paradigm reflected and perpetuated by basal reading programs, standardized tests, and experimental research...."

From such long-range goals, we can begin to derive medium-range goals that can guide instruction, goals such as "Children will begin to understand that writing facilitates reading, and vice versa" and, more specifically, objectives like "In their own writing, children will demonstrate the ability to spell words by using letters to represent sounds" and "In their own reading, children will demonstrate the use of initial consonants in conjunction with context to make a reasonable prediction as to what an unrecognized word might be." These should be reasonable objectives for most first graders.

However, the newer kind of research strongly suggests that it may be counterproductive to reduce our goals to skills objectives like "Children will give the correct sounds for initial consonants," a not atypical kind of goal in many first-grade reading programs. Focusing our teaching and testing upon such minimal objectives tends to limit the reading and writing of children to far less than what they are capable of (DeFord, 1981; Eckhoff, 1986; Phillips, 1986; Ribowsky, 1986). Although children do need to develop such letter/sound knowledge, establishing the acquisition of such knowledge as a minimal objective appears to be a serious mistake. Intensively teaching, practicing, and then testing for such knowledge not only limits children's development of literacy but also results in labeling as slow readers or poor readers many children who can read quite satisfactorily but who have difficulty exhibiting the mastery of such skills in isolation. This may be the greatest tragedy of all.

"...the new paradigm suggests that our goals have been too limited, that we have set our sights too low."

"Success" and "failure" are too narrowly defined

In short, then, basal readers, standardized tests, and the kind of research Groff typically cites are part of a closed system within which "success" and "failure" are all too narrowly defined and measured. The research that has developed within the new paradigm suggests that our goals have been too limited, that we have set our sights too low.

From this expanding research base, we have learned that children can develop an enriched concept of literacy (not merely "basic skills") at an early age (Yaden and Templeton, 1986), in a learning environment that emphasizes daily reading and writing for a variety of purposes, with skills being taught in the context of their use rather than in isolated lessons. And when it is assumed and expected that skills will develop gradually for each child rather than according to some arbitrary timetable, there is evidence that these so-called skills of literacy are best learned, and certainly best applied, when taught as needed in learning to read and write more effectively.

It seems clear, then, that the research base referred to in the *Report Card on Basal Readers* is solid enough to more than justify the authors' vigorous call for specific kinds of improvements in basals and for opening up reading instruction in the United States to various alternatives to basals. Thus in my next segment of this dialogue/debate, I shall—drawing partly but not entirely upon the *Report Card*—offer my own list of needed improvements in basals and suggest alternative programs and materials that better reflect the newer science of the middle to late twentieth century.

~ ~ ~

Patrick Groff: Response to Weaver

Constance Weaver's spirited defense of the soundness of the attack on basal readers made in *Report Card on Basal Readers* (RC) is an insufficiently argued plea for the teaching the RC recommends as the best way to develop children's reading abilities. Her strong endorsement of the RC in this respect has notable shortcomings.

A major unproved assumption

The varied faults in Weaver's advocacy of the RC soon emerge in her remarks to this effect—in its first two paragraphs, as a matter of fact. Here Weaver refers to one of the major unproved assumptions of the RC. This supposition is that teaching children to comprehend literally what an author intended to say is relatively unimportant, if not deleterious to the development of children's critical reading abilities of this material. To this effect, Weaver says that when children are required by the basal reader (BR) to read material "for surface accuracy and details" this will inevitably take so much time that none will be left for making thoughtful responses to this material. Lost, as well, will be children's chances to enjoy this writing or to gain information and understanding of it, Weaver insists.

According to Weaver's line of reasoning, if children are taught to "mechanically" attain the author's intended meaning of a passage, there will be little time to engage in "meaningful" thinking about this written passage. A careful reading of the RC reveals that by going "mechanically through the paces" Weaver refers to the processing of written material by children in a systematic way through the use of reading strategies that have been taught to them directly and intensively.

There can be no forsaking the ideal of advancing children's reading abilities beyond that of accurately paraphrasing what an author intended to say. The ultimate goal for developing such paraphrasing ability is to develop in children the power to examine critically and evaluate the ideas authors aspire to impart. This critical reading is a vital skill, essential to full participation in a democratic society like ours, where all opinions and persuasions theoretically have full and equal access to the marketplace of ideas.

"The ultimate goal for developing... paraphrasing ability is to develop in children the power to critically examine and evaluate the ideas authors aspire to impart."

Weaver's perception of the relationship of reading accuracy and thoughtful, critical reading has fundamental flaws, however. For *one* thing, it reflects a misinterpretation of what Applebee *et al.* (1987) actually say about this relationship. Weaver cites Applebee *et al.* for substantiation of her views, but from their analyses of National Assessment of Educational Progress data, Applebee *et al.* conclude that "such findings are consistent with recent calls for increasing the emphasis on traditional academic studies." (p. 30) Furthermore, they found that the unorthodox "process-oriented instruction" that Weaver favors "may not have been as beneficial as had been hoped." (p.34)

In fact, Applebee *et al.* report that the NAEP data indicate that after a ten-year period in which process-oriented instruction was given, children turned out to be "only slightly more literate than their predecessors." They did not find in the NAEP data, for the period they analyzed it, "substantial increases in the ability [of students] to reason effectively about what was being read." (p.34) Worse yet, this data reflects that process-oriented reading instruction, such as having "students answer their own questions about

what they read," was "inconsistently and sometimes even negatively related to reading proficiency." (p.37)

Second, Weaver's view of how reading aimed at the replication of an author's intentions relates to critical reading also can be questioned on logical grounds. It is true that schemata (a reader's prior knowledge) influences his or her reading comprehension to a greater degree than was thought earlier. It does not make sense, however, to argue (as does one of Weaver's sources of information) that teachers should never "view an individual's comprehension of a text as an inadequate reproduction of the original text." (Pearson, 1986, p. 50) This is an irrelevant argument in favor of schemata. To be critical readers, children must be able to make adequate reproductions of the original text they consult. That is, unless they first accurately conclude what an author's intentions were, they have developed no base for judging whether these intentions were accurate, honorable, relevant, up-to-date, etc.

"...when a child decides to read a passage critically, he or she must first actively pull together what he or she concludes an author planned the passage to say."

In sum, when a child decides to read a passage critically, he or she must first actively pull together what he or she concludes an author planned the passage to say. Then, normally it must be settled by consensus among a group of children – and/or by confirmation from authority figures like teachers – that certain interpretations of an author's intended meaning actually correspond to it more closely than do other translations. Finally, to develop children's critical reading abilities, the teacher should stimulate young readers to make resolutions as to whether what an author desired to portray was ethical, wholly truthful, literary in nature, logical, unbiased, current, and a host of other aspects. Even middle-school teachers using "a broader, comprehension-based approach" have been found to teach as though precise text reproduction by students were fundamental to reading success (Bloome, 1987, p. 146).

The quality of the resolutions that children can make in this regard is greatly influenced, of course, by a number of factors, including children's emotional, mental, and social maturity; the extent of their cultural literacy; their experiential and environmental backgrounds, and even the amount of practice they have had in thinking critically. The critical interpretations that children try to make of reading material thus will be widely varied in their appropriateness. This means it is wise not to lead children to believe that low-quality critical reading will be indulged, condoned, or ignored.

Weaver's contention – that while BRs teach children to paraphrase the precise meaning an author planned for a text to convey, these books do not do so well in teaching children to read critically – doubtless does have merit. The documentation cited by Weaver to this effect is impressive (Applebee *et al.*, 1988).

It is apparent in Weaver's remarks, however, that she is not pleased that the BRs aim to make sure children understand exactly what an author planned for a passage to say. Whenever possible in her commentary she castigates the BR practice of expecting children to give the "right" answer to the teacher's question, "What did this author actually write?" Children should "construct," on their own terms, the meaning of a text, Weaver insists, rather than to strive to recapitulate what an author intended to convey.

Under these conditions there could be no critical reading, however. Critical reading is partly a group activity. That is, the results of a child's verdict as to the veracity, adequacy, modernity, etc. of what an author desired to say, and as to its other merits, are of no consequence unless he or she compares this with other persons' views of the passage in question. Young readers need to weigh their reactions especially against or in comparison

with the views of well-educated, intelligent, culturally literate people – for example, good teachers.

The comprehension of written material does involve both the application of knowledge from the reader's background and an author's intended meaning. "What is not known, however, is how readers go about using that [background] knowledge," and if what we know about it adequately explains its use (Heine, 1985, p. 9:18). It is not proper to insist (as does a source of information Weaver favors), therefore, that in teaching critical reading, teachers should accept the notion that it is appropriate for individual children to "construct" eccentric versions of what an author intended to say (Harste, 1985). If various readers come to different interpretations of what an author wanted to convey, there can be no critical reading (valid judgments) made about its veracity, etc. Thus in preparing children to read critically, it is not advisable to have children "take ownership of reading," as Heine (1985, p. 9:24) contends. To the contrary, unless a group of children agree in advance what an author desired his piece to mean, they have no basis for arguing whether this intended meaning is true, is the latest obtainable, is adequate for its purpose, etc. A pivotal job for the teacher, therefore, is to make sure that this first stage of critical reading is a recognizable goal by all children, and to disabuse them of the notion that the application of critical reading is possible without its attainment.

The third fault in Weaver's first paragraphs is her unwarranted denunciation of the "typical curriculum-oriented classroom," one in which children are given direct and systematic instruction in word recognition and in reading comprehension strategies, one after the other, until they are learned to the point that they can be applied automatically as the child reads. Research suggests that the effective teaching of reading is characterized by a systematic sequence of learning activities, clear demonstrations by the teacher as to precisely what is to be learned, close supervision of pupils' behavior to ensure that this learning takes place, and much teacher-guided practice by pupils that reinforces and maintains the skills that have been acquired. Research thus does not support the notion that children best learn to read in essentially the same way that they learned to speak and listen (Rosenshine and Stevens, 1984).

"Research...does not support the notion that children best learn to read in essentially the same way that they learned to speak and listen..."

Weaver's objections to the empirical findings about direct versus informal, incidental instruction are puzzling to others as well as to me. Roehler, Duffy, and Meloth (1986, p. 84) also find it difficult to accept Weaver's view: "On the one hand they [Weaver and those she represents] argue persuasively for the existence of a language system which governs the meaning-getting process, but on the other they argue against directly sharing with students knowledge about how this system works." That is, "it is assumed that students will learn about them [cue systems, text types, etc.] while reading." In other words, by simply engaging in sustained silent reading, children supposedly will spontaneously become better readers – that is, they will gain control over the processes they need in order to recognize words and to gain meaning from written texts. Such a stand on this issue indicates that Weaver systematically rejects extensive evidence, such as that gathered by Paris (1986), that direct coaching of children to consciously apply reading strategies results in higher reading comprehension scores than otherwise are attainable.

Weaver's unproved criticism of basal readers

In the opening paragraphs of her remarks on the RC, Weaver does not adequately convince her readers of the validity of the negative criticism

she makes against basal readers. She does not prove here that requiring children to carefully attend to exactly what the authors of BR stories hope their reading audiences will comprehend about these tales will then necessarily prevent children from engaging in meaningful, thoughtful, and enjoyable experiences with them. The probability that BRs currently do not teach enough about critical reading does not prove they could never be designed to serve this purpose more adequately.

Neither does Weaver demonstrate that BRs violate empirical findings when they expect children to reproduce the intended meanings of BR stories that their authors designed for them. By setting up these expectations, and by following through to make sure that students meet them, BRs actually provide learners with one of the cardinal prerequisites for critical reading. It appears, as well, that the BRs, and not Weaver, are in conformity with what the research suggests about the relative effectiveness of direct versus informal instruction in reading.

"...BRs, and not Weaver, are in conformity with what the research suggests about the relative effectiveness of direct versus informal instruction in reading."

Déjà vu

The next one-third of Weaver's opening remarks review the RC's charges that BR teaching of reading is significantly less effective than is the instruction for this purpose proposed by the RC, and that BRs make the outlandish claim they can teach any child to read well. I have dealt in my opening remarks with the unsubstantial nature of these attempts to disparage BR programs.

It is more useful at this point, therefore, to raise some questions about the prediction of infallibility in teaching reading that Weaver makes for the type of instruction the RC espouses. It is well to recall that the RC plan for teaching reading recommends against any direct instruction in word recognition or in comprehension skills, such as the use of metacognition and schemata, rejects the teaching of hierarchically arranged reading skills and vocabulary, bans the use of practice materials such as worksheets, advises teachers in individual schools against dedicating themselves to a common methodology, and denounces frequent testing of reading skills aimed at determining children's grade-level attainments.

It bears repeating that the RC does not present convincing empirical evidence that teaching reading in the fashion it prescribes will actually bring on greater reading development in children than is possible through the use of basal reader programs. Weaver's denunciation of the fact that BRs recommend that teachers maintain overt control over the instructional and learning procedures of reading lessons therefore seems unfair.

It also is erroneous to say, the research suggests, that children who cannot learn phonics become "quite able" readers (Weaver, 1988, p. 103), or that "more phonics instruction will simply make the child an even poorer reader than he already is." (p. 326) Equally dubious is the notion that teachers "shouldn't formally teach about the language cue systems." (Newman, 1985, p. 105)

"I'm not sure that making this [phonics] knowledge explicit would be of much use to them [beginning readers]," Hollaway (1979, p. 106) agrees. This comment appears as unsubstantiated by research as is Lindfors' (1987, p. 231) notion that if illiterate pupils simply are presented with "interesting, well-written texts" they will spontaneously become good readers.

It is clear that the experimental examinations of Smith's (1986, p. 177) proposal, "Don't teach reading. Let it happen," have proved this proposition to be unreliable advice. Nor does the empirical evidence corroborate the no-

tion that in teaching children to become critical readers, teachers should allow wrong impressions of what an author intended to say to remain unchallenged. Shuy's (1981, p. 107) advice to encourage children to "experiment freely" and "unabashedly" with what an author intended a passage to mean would thus be unlikely to lead to effective critical reading. (Newman, Holdaway, Lindfors, Smith, and Shuy, readers of Weaver's remarks will note, are sources of information she basically depends on for her conclusions about how reading should be taught.)

Weaver's six big objections to BRs

Weaver devotes the next section of her remarks entitled, "The basic premise, promise, and principle of the basal program," to an elaboration of six major grievances she has regarding BRs.

One: In the first of these, she alleges that so much time during the school day is taken up with BR activities that "there is very little time, if any, for other reading and writing." In San Diego schools, which apparently are representative of those in large-city districts, however, teachers are directed to use 25 to 30 percent of the school day in grades one and two for BR activities. This figure is reduced to 17 to 24 percent in grades three through six. Surely, then, it is unreasonable for Weaver to maintain that the large remainder of the school day, that is not concerned with BRs, offers little or no opportunity for children to read and write using materials not connected with BRs.

"...it is unreasonable...to maintain that the large remainder of the school day, that is not concerned with BRs, offers little or no opportunity for children to read and write...."

Two: Weaver is repelled by the fact that BRs tend to give teachers explicit directions as to how to carry out reading instruction. Teachers are so "intimidated by the imperative language of the teachers' manuals," Weaver believes, that they cravenly relinquish, in favor of the BR manuals, their better, professional judgments as to how this instruction should be carried on. Weaver obviously is referring here to a different sample of teachers than I have been associated with over the past forty years. The great majority of teachers I have observed tend to be generally independent-minded, self-directed people, whose academic freedom is strongly protected by their secure job tenure. More often than not, these people are quite unfearful of arbitrary or implausible demands made on them from forces that try to challenge or compromise their professionalism.

In this respect Weaver appears to overlook the evidence that I cited earlier that indicates that teachers in fact may not be the slavish adherents to BR directives that she makes them out to be. In any event, equating unprofessionalism in teachers with loyalty by them to BRs appears to be more a sign of overweening presumption on Weaver's part than a matter of fact.

Three: Weaver chooses in this section of her opening remarks to avail herself of yet another opportunity to reprimand BRs for expecting children to grasp the precise meaning of a text that its author planned it to have. I have previously dealt in detail with the reasons why such negative criticism of BRs is ill-founded and therefore questionable. It is sufficient to repeat at this point that if a key goal of reading in a democratic society is to develop students who are able to read critically, it is essential that they develop the capacities to paraphrase accurately the meanings authors hope their written materials will convey. Basal readers appear to accept this principle.

On the other hand, Weaver appears to misapprehend the relationship between children's giving the "right" answer about what an author intended to say, and a critical reading of this same material. It is not an "insidious" practice, as she contends, to require that children, at one phase

in reading critically, give a "single right answer" based on exactly what the text they are reading had planned to say. Unless children can arrive successfully at this first stage of critical reading they have little chance, indeed, at correctly judging whether the "right" answer the passage in question offers is truly an accurate one, is sufficient for its purpose, is metaphorical or satirical, etc.

Four: By denouncing the BR practice of teaching children a series of hierarchically arranged reading skills in an ascending order of difficulty, Weaver demonstrates convincingly the intensity of her ideological opposition to such a practice. As strongly as she voices her conviction that the best way to teach reading is to have children learn all the varied reading skills coinstantaneously, however, there is no satisfactory empirical evidence to support such an assumption. In short, the relevant evidence does not corroborate the notion that children learn to read in precisely the same way they learned to speak. Therefore, teachers, and parents as well, should be wary of plans for children's reading development in which the teacher's basic task is simply to surround children with well-written materials, and then stand on the sideline as an enthusiastic cheerleader for the spontaneous progress children supposedly will make toward becoming literate. Basal readers say to the contrary, of course, that there are significant differences between children's learning to read and to speak. They are right; Weaver is wrong.

"...teachers... should be wary of plans for children's reading development in which the teacher's basic task is to simply surround children with well-written materials...."

Neither is it true, as a source of Weaver's information states (Harste, Woodward, and Burke, 1984), that beginning and mature readers use precisely the same strategies when reading. In this respect, guessing at words via the use of context cues is a common practice of embryonic readers but not accomplished ones (Gough, 1985). Thus, if stimulating children to behave like mature readers facilitates their acquisition of reading ability (Teale and Sulzby, 1986), teachers would be in error in accepting Weaver's advice to stress context cues.

Five: The negative criticisms made by Weaver of the literary and rhetorical quality of stories in the BR – stories that control the type of words they present children to learn to recognize – has often been expressed by fault-finders of beginning reading materials. This disapproval is usually based on the assumption, endorsed by Weaver, that children can learn to read by acquiring concurrently all they need to know about this complex, arbitrary language process. "Function always precedes form," one of Weaver's sources of authority on this matter claims (Shuy, 1981, p. 103). Children thus supposedly learn to read "innately and naturally." (p. 106) They presumably develop the ability for "getting things done with [written] language" (p. 106), to "process the text as a whole" (p. 108), before they have gained any control over the techniques of word recognition.

It is illogical, however, to assume that children can use written language "to get things done" before they know how to recognize words. There also appears to be no convincing evidence that reading programs that are conducted under this principle develop readers with relatively superior reading skills. To the contrary, the pertinent research suggests that the "code-emphasis" approach that Chall (1967 and 1983) describes has significantly greater likelihood of success in this respect.

"It is illogical...to assume that children can use written language 'to get things done' before they know how to recognize words."

One of the basic premises of the code-emphasis approach is that young children learning to read not be faced with frustratingly difficult word recognition challenges. Research seems to support the contention that preparing children to decode written words by previously teaching them the letter-speech sound correspondences that are involved in such decoding is the best way to prevent their unsuccessful attempts at word recognition. As

I noted earlier, the fundamental task in teaching children to comprehend what a writer designed his or text to communicate is to instruct children so that they learn to recognize individual words automatically. It follows, therefore, that the ability of children to make attentive and discriminating ruminations about the veracity, appropriateness, probity, etc. of a writer's ideas rests fundamentally on their capacity to recognize words quickly and accurately.

The decision for making this provision to control vocabulary necessarily results in edited versions of certain pieces of literature. Such editing is demanded, the BRs rightly infer, until children can recognize words automatically. As a consequence, however, the overall literary quality of the edited pieces doubtless is negatively affected. One cannot assume, of course, that editors of BRs are more skillful writers than are the original authors of these texts. Weaver implies that such revisions are unnecessary since even beginning readers can readily read any passage of print as long as it has high literary qualities. The research does not sustain her view on this matter, it must be stressed.

Six: Weaver does make a useful comment in the final of her six big objections to BRs. It appears true that BRs unnecessarily extend the time needed to get children ready to read independently. More of this time needs to be devoted to teaching children to decode words automatically, however, and not less, as Weaver insists. I found (Groff, 1988) that decoding instruction in leading BRs was not intensive enough to fully prepare children to decode the new words presented in their reading lessons. The children taught with these BRs thus were not as completely prepared to undertake independent word recognition tasks as they could be.

"...decoding instruction in leading BRs was not intensive enough to fully prepare children to decode the new words presented in their reading lessons."

It is Weaver's position, however, that the best way to get illiterate children to the independent level of reading ability is to always present them with well-written literary materials. If one accepts this presumption, it follows that children can intentionally proceed to learn to read better with fully developed pieces of classical literature than they can with materials that demand application of only the word recognition skills they have learned so far. I know of no convincing evidence that supports Weaver's position on this issue.

Weaver's conclusions

Since Weaver does not make compelling arguments for her six big objections to BRs, it is not possible to accept certain of the conclusions she makes about "emergent literacy."

On the one hand, of course, children do not need formal instruction to learn to speak. This does not confirm that they need no formal instruction in reading, however. Indeed, children's prior knowledge affects how well they are able to detect what an author attempts to convey. This does not verify that children should be encouraged to make eccentric interpretations of an author's intended meaning. True, unnatural sentence patterns sometimes are difficult for children to read. This does not affirm the notion that controls should never be put on the types of words children are given to read. And, without doubt, reading programs should be "enriched with literature." Weaver has no monopoly on this suggestion; it is often made in BRs.

None of these truisms certifies that children learn to read best when teachers expect them to learn all the reading skills spontaneously and simultaneously. Nor do the sources of information Weaver cites in the finale of her opening remarks as support for her assertion actually provide corrobora-

tion for it. I previously noted the lack of such reinforcement from Applebee *et al.*'s (1987) analysis of National Assessment of Education Progress data. Applebee *et al.*'s (1988, p. 25) later inference from such data—that students need to "learn to reason more effectively about what they have read"—therefore could readily be accepted by teachers without their having to reject direct, systematic teaching of reading.

Why young adults have less than desirable abilities to analyze, evaluate, and extend what they read, Venezky *et al.* (1987) conclude, cannot be resolved. "Whether this is because basic skills are not learned well enough or whether complex contexts themselves add an unusually high degree of difficulty, we cannot determine from these [NAEP] data," they report (p. 28).

~ ~ ~

Constance Weaver: Conclusion

Several of Groff's objections I anticipated in my second segment, where I had space to develop a few of the points I only mentioned when delineating some of the *Report Card on Basal Readers'* major objections to basal reading series. However, certain of Groff's points warrant further response, if only because they reflect such serious misconceptions.

First is Groff's *reductio ad absurdum*: He characterizes those who oppose the basal reading program of teaching skill lesson after skill lesson after skill lesson, year after year, as one which advocates an approach "in which the teacher's basic task is to simply surround children with well-written materials, and then stand on the sideline as an enthusiastic cheerleader for the spontaneous progress children supposedly will make toward becoming literate." One might understandably raise concern about such *laissez faire* "process" teaching, but this is not typical of the teaching that reflects the multidisciplinary research into how literacy develops and can best be fostered.

Perhaps it is because Groff's own concept of effective teaching reflects such an extreme that he assumes any differing approach must be equally extreme. On the one hand, Groff apparently advocates direct instruction according to a completely predetermined curriculum guide and lesson plan, such as that found in basal reading systems or in the kind of intensive phonics program he recommends. Such direct instruction usually is offered to whole classes or groups, regardless of individual development or need. Proponents claim a high degree of success when they test for the skills they have directly taught (Rosenshine and Stevens, 1984).

"It is questionable...whether such direct instruction of low-level skills and strategies transfers adequately to real reading and writing...."

It is questionable, however, whether such direct instruction of low-level skills and strategies transfers adequately to real reading and writing tasks, particularly those beyond the classroom. It is this instruction-divorced-from-use that Applebee *et al.* are really questioning, not process teaching *per se* (1987, p. 37). One may reasonably hypothesize that even instruction in using metacognitive strategies (using prior knowledge, predicting, monitoring comprehension, etc.) may be of little value when it is divorced from real reading. In any case, the contrast to such a highly structured approach to teaching is by no means a "do nothing" alternative.

In the more holistic classrooms described in much of the current professional literature (*e.g.*, Newman, 1985; Hansen, Newkirk, and Graves, 1985; Hansen, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Calkins and Harwayne, 1987), whole-class skills instruction is kept to a minimum. Instead, instruction is more often provided to individuals and groups at a time when their own reading and writing indicate a need for such instruction.

For example: A kindergarten or first-grade teacher might initially share a Big Book with children and later draw upon words in that book to call the children's attention to letter/sound relationships, particularly for initial consonants and consonant blends. Similarly, the teacher might help children learn, and then learn to read, simple songs and rhymes, which would later provide the opportunity to focus on major phonograms (*e.g.*, *-ate, -tion, -ght*). The teacher might also help children make letter/sound associations as they compose a story or song or poem together. However, whole-class phonics instruction might begin and end with little more than this. Further help would be provided to individuals and small groups of children. Helping

beginners "spell words as best they can" may be all the instruction many children need in basic letter-sound relationships (and there is no evidence that children persist in spelling words phonetically merely *because of* using this strategy). Other children may benefit from some of the humorous and enjoyable trade books that emphasize basic letter/sound relationships, such as Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*.

"...in more holistic approaches, most direct instruction is provided to give children help when they need it..., rather than to prepare children for tests of so-called reading skills."

Thus in more holistic approaches, most direct instruction is provided to give children help when they need it in reading and writing more effectively, rather than to prepare children for tests of so-called reading skills. And ironically, there is increasing evidence that such needs-based teaching may often produce even better results on skills tests. (See my preceding response to Groff.)

Another kind of irony stems from Groff's statement "To be critical readers, children must be able to make adequate reproductions of the original text they consult. That is, unless they first accurately conclude what an author's intentions were, they have developed no base for judging whether these intentions were accurate, honorable, relevant, up-to-date, etc." The irony here is that Groff himself often fails to achieve that same goal. For example, he apparently believes that I have said or intended to say in my opening statement that "children best learn to read in essentially the same way that they learned to speak and listen" and that "children learn to read best when teachers expect them to spontaneously and simultaneously learn all the reading skills." Both statements are gross exaggerations of what I have said and believe. Thus, Groff himself demonstrates what he would like to deny: the fact that an individual's comprehension of a text will always be, to some degree, "an inadequate reproduction of the original text." (Pearson, 1986, p. 50)

Nevertheless, I find myself more in agreement than disagreement with several of the points Groff has made about critical reading, including his point that readers should come as close as possible to understanding the intended meaning of the author before attempting to critique what the author has written. What concerns me most about the high proportion of literal recall questions in basal reading series (Goodman *et al.*, 1988, p. 81) is not merely that they require a single "right" answer and thus do not encourage critical or creative thinking, but that they do not encourage any thinking at all. That is, all too many of them can be answered merely by locating the appropriate phrase and reciting or copying the words. Such questions do not require even intelligent paraphrasing, but only parroting. Finding the answers to the questions at the end of a selection is often so easy that some children just answer the questions, without reading the story.

Another important issue concerns the nature of the reading materials most suitable for children just learning to read. According to Groff, I have implied that the simplification of texts is unnecessary because "even beginning readers can readily read any passage of print as long as it has high literary qualities." I am at a loss to find anything in my original text that could reasonably lead a reader to that conclusion. The closest statement is, I think, the following: "Texts consisting of only a few simple words repeated in equally simple and stilted sentence patterns are typically less predictable and thus more difficult to read than texts consisting of a greater variety of words that occur in more natural sentence patterns resembling normal speech." Again, Groff has interpreted my words to mean something far different from what I said or believe.

But he does not stop with this. He says that if one accepts my presumption that children should be presented with well-written literary

materials, "it follows that children can initially proceed to learn to read better with fully developed pieces of classical literature" than with "materials that demand application of only the word recognition skills they have learned so far." Having attributed to me his own *non sequitur*, Groff then concludes that there is no convincing evidence to support *my* position!

In one of his statements, though, Groff does come close to saying what I believe, and what research supports: that children find it easiest to learn to read when they are presented with *well-written* materials that are predictable and that sound like natural language, rather than materials that are created to give repeated practice in basic letter/sound relationships or in recognizing basic sight words. The following is the beginning of a book that uses such natural, predictable language. The excerpt is from Joy Cowley's *Greedy Cat*, a book in the *Ready to Read* series from New Zealand (hence *Mum* rather than *Mom*):

"...children find it easiest to learn to read when they are presented with well-written materials that are predictable and that sound like natural language...."

Mum went shopping
and got some sausages.
Along came greedy cat.
He looked in the shopping bag.
Gobble, gobble, gobble
and that was the end of that.

The text quickly becomes predictable, as subsequent episodes have identical language, except of course for the new item that Mum buys. (Finally she buys a pot of pepper—and that is the end of *that*!)

There are two major factors that can make beginning reading materials more predictable and thus easier to read. One is natural language—that is, language that sounds like what real people say, and that is therefore more predictable than the stilted language typically found in the earliest readers of most basal series. The second factor is predictable patterns—that is, language that contains repetition and other kinds of patterns, including rhythm and rhyme. Thus I would agree with Groff and others that beginning reading materials should be simplified in certain ways and should include a high degree of repetition, but the simplification should not result in unnatural language and the repetition should occur at the phrase and sentence and stanza level rather than at the level of the word or letter/sound pattern.

Phonics revisited

As noted earlier, even most proponents of phonics see phonics instruction as playing a limited, though important, role in beginning reading instruction (*e.g.*, Anderson *et al.*, 1985).

Various kinds of research suggest several significant reasons for limiting the teaching of phonics to far less than what Groff advocates. One is that it would take far too many rules to be able to decode a significant number of the words that young children would normally encounter in all but the most stilted of primers. Second, phonics rules are often rather complex, not to mention too abstract for children to grasp and apply *consciously*. Third, very few rules are both consistent enough and applicable to enough words to be useful (*e.g.*, Clymer, 1963).

Furthermore, words can often be identified by using just context plus consonants, with little attention to the vowels; so there is inadequate justification for the heavy attention to vowel patterns that Groff advocates. (See, for example, Chapter 3 of Weaver, 1988, for a discussion of the limitations of phonics). But perhaps the most important reason for not teaching phonics intensively (other than the fact that children do not *need* so much

phonics instruction) is that teaching a lot of phonics may be partly what causes most young readers and the poorer readers at all levels to be conscious of only one major strategy (other than asking someone) for dealing with words not immediately recognized: namely, "Sound it out" (Applebee *et al.*, 1988, pp. 30-31). Unfortunately, *this strategy by itself* seldom works, unless children are reading the severely controlled kinds of materials that Groff advocates.

Perhaps it is for such reasons that even supporters of phonics instruction do not generally concur with Groff's call for greater emphasis on teaching phonics. For example, the authors of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* warn that phonics instruction can only be expected to help children come up with *approximate* pronunciations that must be checked against their knowledge of real words and against the context in which they occur; that children need a working knowledge of basic letter/sound relationships but do not need to be able to state the "rules"; and that phonics instruction should teach only the most important and regular of the letter/sound relationships (Anderson *et al.*, 1985, pp. 38-40).

"...phonics instruction can only be expected to help children come up with approximate pronunciations...."

What, then, of the research purporting to show that intensive phonics instruction gets children off to a "better start" in reading, at least when measured by standardized tests of skills? First, even some phonics advocates admit that the experimental research is not interpreted by every researcher as favoring this conclusion (*e.g.*, Chall 1983, p. 6). Other researchers have concluded that the experimental research does not clearly favor one method over another. (See, for example, Corder, 1971, a study which analyzed 1,855 research documents in reading published between 1960 and 1970.)

In her recent article "Debunking the Great Phonics Myth," Marie Carbo (1988b) notes that the current rage for teaching phonics systematically and intensively, divorced from real reading and writing, is based almost entirely upon the research analyzed and summarized by Jeanne Chall in *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* (1967; updated edition, 1983).

Carbo points out what Chall admitted in her original attempt to synthesize the results of the experimental research studies: that many of them had serious design flaws. However, Carbo's discussion of the data summarized by Chall reveals some additional flaws in Chall's own analysis and reporting of these studies; in several ways, she tended to skew the data as being more favorable to phonics instruction than the data seem to warrant. Carbo demonstrates that this criticism applies not only to the studies reviewed and to the conclusions in Chall's first 1967 edition of *The Great Debate*, but also to the post-1967 studies that Chall (1983) discusses as well, namely the 27 USOE studies (Bond and Dykstra, 1967), the Follow Through studies of the early 1970s (*e.g.*, Becker and Gersten, 1982), and the results of 21 post-1964 experiments which explored the effectiveness of differing kinds and amounts of phonics.

Thus *even from the limited and limiting perspective of experimental research focused on the mastery of reading skills*, it appears that there is inadequate justification for the recent advocacy of phonics instruction in such publications as *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson *et al.*, 1985) and the U.S. Office of Education's publications *What works* (1987) and "What We Know About Phonics" (1988). While probably no one disagrees that children need to develop a working knowledge of basic letter/sound relationships and that a certain amount of direct help is probably necessary for some if not many children, the precise nature and amount of instruction needed are, at the very least, still open to question. Certainly reading styles research suggests that it varies with the child (*e.g.*, Carbo, 1987b), while the newer multi-

disciplinary research base suggests that the amount needed is generally much less than commonly supposed.

It should be noted that to the extent that there is any research supporting the basal readers' emphasis upon teaching reading skills, it is mostly research on the effectiveness of phonics instruction and/or research on the effectiveness of so-called direct instruction. But the evidence favoring phonics seems shaky at best, and it is seriously questionable to what extent direct instruction of reading and writing skills will transfer to real reading and writing, particularly since such direct instruction reflects the rather thoroughly discredited model of learning reflected in Thorndike's "laws of learning." A growing body of research suggests, in fact, that teaching skills in the context of their use is much more effective, particularly when schools are trying to achieve genuine literacy rather than merely to achieve high scores on tests of "reading achievement" or "writing achievement."

Improving the basals

There are various ways basal readers can be improved to move in the direction of developing the ability to read and write and think, and away from the focus on mastering discrete skills. The following recommendations for improving the basals are keyed to the aforementioned six ways in which basals attempt to control teaching and learning, in accordance with Thorndike's outmoded "laws of learning":

"...it is vital that the publishers...of basals...provide a rich variety of literature and other print materials from which students themselves can select much of what they read."

1. As long as basals typically control the reading curriculum, it is vital that the publishers (authors and editors) of basals make it clear that children do not need such extensive instruction, practice, and assessment of skills as the basals typically provide, and concomitantly provide a rich variety of literature and other print materials from which students themselves can select much of what they read. For example: The 1989 Riverside Reading Program at least attempts to downplay skills by offering not only a traditional skill-oriented *Instructional Resource Manual* but also an alternative *Literature Resource Manual* that includes much less skills work, the implication being that the extensive skills work is not really necessary. Some basal publishers are now offering collections of children's literature that are thematically related to the basal units; this too is a step in the right direction. Thus basals could help free teachers from dependency upon the skills lessons and worksheets in the basal programs, and these materials could be diminished as high quality reading materials are increased.

2. Though basals typically control teachers, it should be possible for basals to empower teachers instead. Instead of telling teachers exactly what to do, and using imperative "Do this," "Do that" language that undermines teachers' authority, the teachers' manuals could use every means possible to encourage teachers to make instructional decisions based upon what they know about the children in their classroom, as well as what they know about the reading process and the acquisition of literacy. It would help simply to replace imperative directions with language like "You may find some children will benefit from...." However, I think teachers should be reminded *at several points within each lesson* that they can and should determine whether or not the lesson or parts of it should be taught and, if so, how and to whom. The philosophy statements and educational materials provided for teachers can help them develop the expertise to make sound decisions.

3. Much can be done to lessen the ways in which basals control students. One way is to encourage a much higher degree of student choice in what is read and in how the students will develop and demonstrate their understanding of what is read. Often, the "enrichment" activities offered in a

basal do much more to stimulate higher-level thinking than the all-too-typical comprehension questions, many of which students can answer by just finding the right phrase in the text. The teachers' manuals can encourage group discussion of the selections and group problem-solving based on the selection. And of course the comprehension questions can be greatly improved, to stimulate critical and creative thinking as well as personal involvement in the readings. I would suggest, for example, that literal recall questions be entirely eliminated except when they are a springboard to more challenging questions.

4. Instead of giving the impression that the program must be taught as it is presented, skill after skill, lesson after lesson, the teachers' manuals could emphasize the frequent arbitrariness of the scope and sequencing of lessons and the fact that children do not need such extensive or such carefully sequenced skill work in order to learn to read effectively. Also, the manuals could and should emphasize strategies for getting meaning rather than skills for identifying words. There is a danger here, however, as implied above. If such strategies are taught, practiced, and tested as mechanically as word-identification skills have been, research suggests that they may not transfer very successfully to real reading. Thus, more than anything else, the teachers' manuals should keep encouraging teachers to have children spend most of their language arts time doing real reading and writing, not isolated work on skills or strategies.

"If such strategies are taught, practiced, and tested as mechanically as word-identification skills have been, research suggests that they may not transfer very successfully to real reading."

5. The basals need to modify their criteria for developing beginning reading materials. Instead of creating texts with stilted, unnatural language that offers practice in basic letter/sound patterns or sight words, the publishers need to develop highly predictable materials, such as songs and poems, stories in which whole lines or stanzas are repeated, and other kinds of patterned stories, such as folktales and modern stories with similar patterns. Paradoxically, such materials will make it easier for most children to learn basic letter/sound patterns and sight words than the texts which limit children to such elements (Bridge, Winograd, and Haley, 1983). Also, basals should cease simplifying and altering children's literature. (For some particularly distressing examples of the simplification of texts and the alteration of literature, see Goodman *et al.*, 1988, pp. 66-76.)

6. Basals can do a lot to help teachers understand that children may be much more – or less – proficient at constructing meaning from real texts than their "reading achievement" scores would indicate. Basal programs should suggest alternative ways of managing the classroom and assessing reading progress, such as grouping students together by interest and having weekly individual conferences with each student instead of listening to students read round-robin. By suggesting alternative management strategies and providing a variety of forms for record-keeping, basal programs can help teachers promote reading for "real" purposes rather than for taking tests – a practice which may well improve the scores on whatever "objective" tests the children are still required to take. (See my Response to Groff.)

Many authors and editors of basals are aware, I think, that such changes need to be made. One recent series that makes significant progress in some of these directions is the 1989 Heath Reading (and there may be others of which I am unaware). The *Impressions* series (1986) imported from Canada by Holt, Rinehart is even more innovative in certain respects. We should remember, however, that the publishers' bottom line is profit. Any change that might significantly threaten their sales is not likely to be made.

Choosing other alternatives

Since basals as a genre are understandably resistant to major change and are probably limited in the degree to which they can reflect the current understanding of reading and the development of literacy, it is fortunate that various alternatives are becoming available. Most of these programs offer at beginning levels a collection of Big Books for shared reading, plus accompanying little books and cassettes, all with an emphasis on predictable language. In most cases there is a single teachers' manual for the entire program or a significant portion thereof, reflecting the philosophy that teachers need general guidance and some suggestions for particular lessons, but not detailed word-by-word suggestions of what to say and do. Some programs include not only a variety of literature, but books to stimulate wide reading "across the curriculum." Most of the programs are imported from New Zealand or Australia, where they have a considerable history of success. Space limitations preclude further discussion, but the following list includes the best-known mid-1980s programs, as well as some newer ones:

Grades K-1 Literature-based program from 21st Century Education

Grades K-2 *Story Box:* Distributed by the Wright Group and by Rigby
Ready to Read: Distributed by Richard C. Owen Company
Bookshelf: Distributed by Scholastic

Grades K-4 *Sunshine Series* Distributed by the Wright Group

Grades K-6 *Bridges:* Scholastic

Such programs reflect, probably to a much greater degree than basal reading series ever can, the recent research into how people read and write and how children learn to read and write. Consequently, such programs have the potential to be far more effective in promoting literacy than the typical basal reading series, when used by teachers who understand the principles upon which they are based. Fortunately, most of the programs themselves help develop that understanding, thus empowering first teachers and then children.

Conclusion

As the *Report Card on Basal Readers* demonstrates, basal reading systems are based upon outmoded concepts of learning from the 1920s, concepts shown to be inadequate by more recent research in a variety of interrelated disciplines. In some ways basals as a genre may be fatally flawed, but still they can be much improved, to reflect more of what we know about how people read and how children learn to read. If the market demands such improvement, the basals will change. However, such improved basals will never supplant the alternative kinds of programs briefly mentioned above. At a rapidly accelerating rate, more and more teachers are adopting such programs in their efforts to draw upon what they know about how to help children become joyfully and functionally literate. We need not only to encourage the development of better basals but also to encourage the development of alternative programs and to rescind restrictive policies that mandate the use of basals, so that teachers can better help our children achieve their full potential as readers, writers, and thinkers. Such are among the recommendations offered in the *Report Card on Basal Readers*.

"In some ways basals as a genre may be fatally flawed, but still they can be much improved, to reflect more of what we know about how people read and how children learn to read."

~ ~ ~

Patrick Groff: Conclusion

The readers of the present debate over the dependability and soundness of the *Report Card on Basal Readers*'s disapproval of the use of basal readers should by this time have gained a reasonably adequate perspective of the contrasting nature of Constance Weaver's and my views on this issue. It is now appropriate, in conclusion, to return to a commentary on the RC itself.

Deficiencies in the RC

As opposed to Weaver, I maintain that there are serious deficiencies in the RC's critique of basal readers. This does not mean, however, that I disagree entirely with what the document says. To the contrary, it seems to me unreasonable to argue against the RC's recommendation, for example, that teachers, rather than state department of education bureaucrats, should decide which BR, if any, best meets the needs of pupils in individual classrooms. It is also doubtful that many reading experts would dispute the RC's appeal to BR publishers to "discontinue the practice of revising and censoring selections from children's literature" that they present in their texts (p. 153).

The faults there are in the RC's analysis of BRs I find to lie elsewhere. I believe that some of the inaccurate judgments the monograph makes about purported weaknesses of BRs can be classified into the following categories:

"The manner in which the RC was conceived and written remains a fundamental shortcoming of the document...."

One: The manner in which the RC was conceived and written remains a fundamental shortcoming of the document for me, despite Weaver's assurance that all members of the NCTE's Commission on Reading share its "broad concerns about basal readers." The RC was organized and written by four reading experts who held a similar point of view about basal readers before the RC was written, the document concedes. No effort apparently was made on their part to submit their preconceptions about these texts to challenges from advocates of BRs during the time the monograph was written. There seems to have been no attempt to stimulate equal input into this writing from reading experts with positive opinions about the values of BRs. The RC therefore represents a marshalling of all the empirical evidence and opinion, of whatever nature, that finds the use of BRs to be objectionable. On the other hand, findings and viewpoints that favor BRs appear to have been ignored or rejected, as a matter of course, by the writers of the RC.

The authors of the RC do claim that reactions to the preliminary draft of the RC were solicited from participants in a meeting held in connection with an annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English. The RC notes that these responses "were extremely useful in the revision of the draft report." (p. vii) This explanation would be more convincing, however, if the authors of the RC had indicated in the monograph what significant or fundamental disparagements of BRs, that it made in its preliminary draft, were forsaken and not included in the final draft as a result of the criticism of it at this meeting. There is no comment about any such concession making in the RC.

The authors of the RC claim that in writing it, they "have not tried to be neutral," but "have tried to be fair." (p. v) To assume, however, that writers can maintain, without being challenged, an eccentric, predisposed point of view, a partiality and predilection toward, or preconception of an issue, and at the same time produce an unbiased, undogmatic, even-handed,

and equitable treatment of it, is wishful thinking. Attempts at such an impossible task inevitably will result, as it has in the RC, in something less than an objective, scientific analysis.

Two: The present debate over whether the RC's stand against basal readers is fair, reasonable, and corroborated by the empirical evidence rests, to a great extent, on whether one has confidence in Gough's (1985, p. 688) conclusion that "the hallmark of the skilled reader is the ability to recognize accurately, easily, and swiftly, isolated words." I believe that Gough has correctly interpreted the relevant experimental research on this issue when he makes this statement. Then, as Johnson and Baumann (1984, p. 595) advise teachers in the *Handbook of Reading Research*, "if you want to improve [children's] word-identification ability, teach phonics." And, without doubt, phonics information is best taught in a direct and systematic fashion (Rosenshine and Stevens, 1984).

The RC is diametrically opposed to an interpretation of the findings of research that leads to these conclusions. It therefore rejects any "precise, direct, and goal-directed" (p. 124) teaching of reading, and the deduction "that learning is the direct result of teaching." (p. 125) The authors of the RC contend, to the contrary, that "new understandings of the reading process, and new insights into teaching and learning" (p. 124) invalidate, for example, the research that has ascertained that individual word recognition is the factor more closely related to reading comprehension than is any other linguistic element, and that teaching children to decode words through the application of phonics information is the best way to develop pupils' abilities to recognize words quickly and accurately.

"The RC....rejects any 'precise, direct, and goal-directed' teaching of reading, and the deduction 'that learning is the direct result of teaching.'"

It is obvious from the disputation over what research truly says, that the "great debate" among reading experts over how reading should be taught that Chall described so well in 1967 continues to remain in force.

This controversy doubtless will prevail as long as there is disagreement among reading authorities as to what constitutes acceptable research in reading development. The contention about this research portends that those who place total confidence in the RC will agree that the best investigations are, in Weaver's words, "naturalistic," or "quasi-experimental." This often is "observational" research, that is, the collecting of anecdotes about children's learning behavior, as opposed to research that uses tests or measures that have been proved to be reliable in their administration. Allegiance to this kind of research by the RC is not surprising since findings from traditional, controlled-experiment research do not support the RC position on what is the best way to develop reading ability.

On the other hand, to agree with a negative appraisal of the RC means one favors controlled experimentation in reading, the type customarily carried out in most scientific investigations, in which standardized test data is gathered, analyzed, and interpreted. Readers of this debate over the accuracy of the RC must decide, therefore, on which side of these differing views as to the relative merit of research models their sympathy lies. In large measure, this choice will determine for the conscientious reader of the RC whether the document is entirely valid, as Weaver claims, or whether it contains significant misstatements and signs of faulty judgment, as I contend.

Three: The RC advocates an overly simplified, and therefore inadequate, program of reading instruction. One has to study the monograph carefully in order to discern exactly what are the allowable as versus forbidden elements of the program that it fosters. It is not correct, however, to protest as Weaver does, that "the Report Card *does not advocate any program!*" True, the aspects of the reading program that it promotes must be identified

largely through a process of noting the features which it disapproves. It is clear, nonetheless, that the RC reveals in no uncertain terms that it is unalterably opposed to:

- the teaching of a hierarchy of sequential reading skills;
- materials with a controlled vocabulary, especially for the purpose of teaching phonics;
- the teaching of speech sounds, letters, or words in isolation;
- the use of standardised or basal reader-type texts;
- the utilisation of workbooks or worksheets;
- direct or explicit instruction;
- phonics teaching (which supposedly makes learning to read hard);
- setting up a scope and sequence chart of what should be taught;
- lesson plans, especially for teaching word recognition;
- teachers depending on methods of teaching;
- readiness activities that prepare children to recognise words;
- the idea that reading comprehension is dependent on word recognition;
- teaching comprehension as a set of skills;
- expecting children to give correct answers, even to literal questions; and even
- the teaching of context cues (at least, according to Weaver).

The RC's reading program is guided, it notes, by a "whole language philosophy" (p. 24), and "holistic views of teaching" (p. 130). It is very difficult to identify widely held convictions as to what these terms exactly mean. I have found that when one attempts to specify in terms of teacher and pupil's behavior what the terms denote, there often is a complaint from individual whole language advocates, "No, that is not what I believe." In any event, the RC does give noteworthy examples of how it considers this philosophy to operate, for instance: "During the course of learning to read "*almost all* the rules, the cues, and *all* the feedback can be obtained [by beginning readers] *only* through the process of reading itself." (p. 129) [*emphasis added*]

The RC does concede that teachers should "assist" children in "learning the techniques of confirmation and self-correction as aspects of self-improvement in reading." (p. 130) Apparently this assistance is of relatively slight importance, however, since the RC gives no example of how often, how soon, in what conditions, and with what particular purpose it is applied. Weaver contends that the RC does not imply that almost all the reading teacher need do is provide reading texts for illiterate pupils, and then set them free to teach themselves to read. I submit, however, that most experienced teachers who read the RC will be shocked by its gross underestimation of how much legitimate help a teacher actually can give to children learning to read. It appears, then, that if basal readers tend to overguide teachers in this respect, the RC without doubt underestimates what their role can and should be.

The method of instruction the RC praises works well in New Zealand, the monograph assures the skeptical critic. As proof for this claim, the

RC contends that the writers of the federally sponsored study *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson *et al.*, 1985), acknowledge that the "whole language" methods of teaching reading the RC espouses "have been used successfully in New Zealand." (p. 31) What the writers of the National Academy of Education monograph actually recognize, however, in Clay's (1976, p. 335) assertion that "it has been unfashionable in New Zealand to teach phonics for the last 30 years." According to Clay, reading instruction that she favors makes it possible that "reading for understanding precedes any instruction on the decoding aspects of the task" of learning to read. Clay would have us believe, in short, that children in New Zealand can gain the understanding of written material before they are taught to recognize the words in this material.

While there is documented evidence that students in New Zealand read in a superior fashion, Clay presents no such confirmation for her views that pupils' attainment of an understanding of what authors intend to say can precede their recognition of the words authors use for this purpose. The illogicality of Clay's description of reading teaching in New Zealand also is apparent. If teachers of reading in that country can arrange for children to get to the meaning of a passage (an ultimate goal of reading instruction) without teaching them how to recognize words, why would these teachers then turn back and teach decoding? It is highly dubious, to be sure, that successful reading instruction in New Zealand, or in any other country for that matter, could be conducted in the way Clay says it should be done.

"It is highly dubious, to be sure, that successful reading instruction in New Zealand, or any other country for that matter, could be conducted in the way Clay says it should be done."

Four: The RC's position on the testing of children's reading is too extremist to be acceptable. The document does make a valid point in that the tests BR systems provide for teachers to use with their pupils are not written as well as they could be. Since this fault is not beyond the capability of BRs to reform, the writers of the RC, to make their point impressively, were forced to escalate the harshness of their castigations of BR tests. To accomplish this, they added the additional charge that these tests do not measure what such tests should gauge, a far more serious accusation against them, of course.

What the RC intends to convey by this second, more grievous reproach of BR tests is the monograph's disapproval of the practice of asking children to supply correct answers about what they have read in order to satisfy the expectations of BR tests. I have discussed in detail the authentic need to gain such information from children as a means to determine how well they understand what an author intended to say. No critical reading can take place unless this level of understanding is first reached. It is clear, therefore, that there is a demonstrable obligation to require children to read sentences carefully so that they do not make erroneous interpretations of an author's intended meaning.

However, this necessity runs counter to the RC supposition that children always should be given complete "ownership of their reading" (p. 125), that is, total "ownership of their own learning processes in developing literacy." (p. 126) According to the RC, each child should be encouraged to construct, without fear of contradiction, his or her own peculiar meaning of a passage. In short, children supposedly should assume little or no responsibility for gaining a precise understanding of the meaning an author had designed—unless on their own they elect to do so. Accordingly, the child purportedly should be prompted "to experiment, to take risks" (p. 125), to decide for himself or herself what an author planned to relate, without teachers "saying 'That's right' or 'That's wrong.'" (p. 130)

Fine: The recommendations made at the end of the RC seemingly are aimed at what should happen to BRs in the future. Too often, however, this counsel is a thinly disguised plea for the kind of reading instruction that the RC advocates, rather than proposals for improving actual faults in BRs. For example, there is the RC recommendation that "teachers should develop, individually or with others, a clear position on their own on how reading is best taught." (p. 149) The presumption of the RC here is that teachers who have made clear-cut resolutions in this respect in favor of BRs should feel guilty for doing so. Moreover, it seems apparent that the writers of the RC do not propose that teachers make such a decision on how reading is best taught on the basis of a full disclosure of the pros and cons of using BRs. If the authors of the RC had had such a goal in mind, they doubtless would have organized the document into an open discussion of both sides of this issue. Actually, it is only the "non-basal approach" (p. 142) that meets the RC standard as to how reading is best taught. In her part of the present debate, Weaver protests that the RC does not "advocate the elimination of basal readers from the school." Diligent readers of the RC, noting its 143 pages of undeviating denunciation of BRs, will find Weaver's denial difficult to believe.

The recommendation of the RC to allow individual teachers to "make their own decisions" (p. 147) on whether or not to use basal readers is also a subtle attempt to gain acceptance of its particular kind of reading instruction. According to the RC, teachers become "less than responsible professionals" (p. 148) by using BRs in their classes. Never does one read in the RC, however, of any danger to teachers of developing such delinquency from following the instructional program the RC propagates. I argue in the present debate, however, that if what one means by a retreat from professionalism is teacher practices that do not carefully conform to the research findings, then this dereliction of professional duty is more likely to occur with teachers who uncritically adopt the RC's reading program than it is with teachers who do not.

"...most of these professor-authors...doubtless have found that the research leads them to reject some of the 'new concepts and ideas' the RC promotes regarding word recognition instruction."

A similar response can be made to the recommendations the RC makes to teacher educators who write BRs. The RC admonishes them to "rethink their roles," "as professionals," so as to be "more responsive to new concepts and ideas." (p. 150) I suspect that most of these professor-authors indeed have already followed this advice. They doubtless have found that the research leads them to reject some of the "new concepts and ideas" the RC promotes regarding word recognition instruction. It therefore is presumptuous on the RC's part to assume that reading experts who disdain these ideas have not studied them carefully.

What new basal readers should do

If it is important to criticize negatively the present BRs, as I have conceded is necessary, it behooves the critic of these texts to describe the characteristics of the materials that should take their place. Since in certain respects the RC does not satisfactorily fulfill this requirement, it is worthwhile to propose what basal readers of the future should do, keeping in mind what the pertinent research says about this matter.

Basal readers of the future in grades K-2 should have as their main function teaching children to recognize individual words. This word recognition instruction should be begun early enough—and be conducted intensively, systematically, and directly enough—so that by the end of grade 2 normal children will be prepared to decode almost all the written words that will be presented to them in the following grades of school. Some decoding

instruction would be needed to reinforce the skills learned earlier, to make sure that pupils' ability in decoding words progresses acceptably toward the automatic level.

From grade 3 onward, however, the BR program, by and large, should consist of selected pieces of unedited, high-quality literature of increasing difficulty in the types of words, sentences, and concepts that are involved. The emphasis in BRs in grades K–2 thus should be on reading words and connected discourse that is designed to help children perfect their word recognition skills. After grade 2 this emphasis would change from learning how to decode words to reading to learn, to criticize, to enjoy, and to appreciate. Reading for the normal child after grade 2 thus could be conducted on an individualized basis if a teacher favored that system of instruction.

"From grade 3 onward,...the BR program, by and large, should consist of selected pieces of unedited, high-quality literature of increasing difficulty in the types of words, sentences, and concepts that are involved."

The timetable for ending the word-recognition phase of reading instruction and for commencing the reading-of-unedited-literature phase would depend, of course, on how well children progressed in the former. It is probable that a certain percentage of children would be ready for independent reading before the end of grade 2. For them, there are many very easy to read books of literature that they could manage satisfactorily. The BR program of the future should provide such books for children deemed by their teachers to be ready for them.

This plan assumes that learning to decode individual words—and to read sentences whose word types have been constricted so that a high proportion of these words conform to the phonics that beginning readers have been taught—does not lead to reading devoid of meaning for these pupils. Many other experiences should be conducted with these children to show that printed material conveys meaning, such as reading stories aloud to children after showing them that stories are made up of written words.

I contend that this blueprint for the reform of BRs finds greater support from the experimental research than does the proposal made by the RC. My design for such improvement of BRs, I believe, also stands a greater chance of being endorsed by teachers than does the RC's scheme. Without such acceptance by teachers, of course, there is little likelihood that any arrangement for the refinement of BRs that is advanced, regardless of its merit, will be scrupulously implemented by teaching staffs.

Summary

To sum up, where the RC tends to go askew is in its contention that the reading program it advocates will fulfill the promise that it wrongly denounces the BRs for making, to wit: Our reading program "can teach all children to read regardless of teacher competence and regardless of learner difference." (p. 133) In truth, the RC is less modest and more self-congratulatory in this matter than are the BRs. The writers of the RC proclaim that the "industrial management technology rooted in science" (p. 133) which BRs employ will not solve all pupils' personal and social problems. If teachers will act as "professionals" and "liberate themselves from the control of basals," (p. 135)— that is, give up the direct, systematic, intensive, and early teaching of word recognition, especially phonics, such a goal can be reached, the RC strongly implies. This is a pledge the RC reading program is less likely to fulfill than can the BR system, I contend.

A major unacceptable aspect of the RC grows out of its self-assurance on this point. This fault is its unswerving devotion to the principle that if reading programs are organized so "that children can learn [to read] with

authentic literature right from the beginning' (p. 136), there is no need for direct and systematic instruction in word recognition.

To this critic it becomes clear, then, that the BRs and the RC represent two bodies of opinion as to how reading instruction should be conducted, both of which are in need of basic reform. For example, the BRs need to improve on the quality and quantity of the literature they offer children. They should give more emphasis to the development of critical reading skills. The kinds of tests they provide should reflect this new stress on critical thinking.

As for the reading program the RC espouses, it needs to accept the established fact that the direct and systematic teaching of word recognition is fundamental to the most effective development of children's reading skills that is possible. Without making this basic compromise to its program of reading, the RC risks the loss of respect from teachers for the pertinent advice about the teaching of reading that it does offer.

The ultimate misfortune of the appearance of the RC is the fact that it roils the waters of the great debate over reading instruction that Chall (1967) described so well over a generation ago. Instead of acting as a force to lessen the fervor of the disputants in this argument, the RC instead heightens its intensity, driving opposing sides even further apart.

Long-term, bitter contentions are not uncommon among academicians; the lengthy disagreement among professors of English over theories of literary criticism comes readily to mind. Clashes over such matters have few if any practical consequences, however. In this sense, they are like tempests in a teapot.

On the other hand, the spectacle of professors of education unable to agree on what are the overall or general findings of the numerous experimental investigations made into the development of children's word recognition abilities is of far-reaching significance. This continued hapless exhibition of an uncompromising war of words doubtless contributes to the fact our schools do not teach reading as efficiently as is possible.

There appear to be varied reasons why some professors of education cling stubbornly to positions they hold about word recognition development in spite of empirical evidence that strongly suggests they are in error (Groff, 1987). Often the analytic sensibilities of these professors are eclipsed by the compulsion of a magisterial ideology.

Even more often, these professors are not held accountable for their theories or advice, however brash or outlandish they may be. A notable exception is the Bromley, England, affair (Beattie, 1988). In the fall of 1987, the school board of this London suburb decided it would no longer honor course work taken by its teachers in the whole language approach, which the RC advocates, nor hire new teachers so trained. This decision seems justified. It was discovered that a third of the seven year olds in the Bromley schools, pupils who had been taught with the whole language approach for two years, were no further ahead in their reading skills than when they started school.

It has been proposed in America, as well, that one way to help resolve the seemingly unreconcilable great debate over reading instruction is to hold university departments of education accountable for how well their graduates can teach children to read. I would welcome the establishment of this system for reckoning whether the *Report Card*'s approach to reading development is the best we can offer our nation's children.

~ ~ ~

References

Anderson, Richard C.; Hiebert, Elfrieda H.; Scott, Judith A.; and Wilkinson, Ian A.G. *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading.* Champaign, Illinois: Center for the Study of Reading and Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Education, 1985.135pp. [ED 253 865]

Applebee, Arthur N.; Langer, Judith A.; and Mullis, Ina V.S. *Learning to Be Literate in America: Reading, Writing, and Reasoning. The Nation's Report Card.* Princeton, New Jersey: National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, 1987. 52pp. [ED 281 162]

Applebee, Arthur N.; Langer, Judith A.; and Mullis, Ina V.S. *Who Reads Best? Factors Related to Reading Achievement in Grades 3, 7, and 11.* Princeton, New Jersey: National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, 1988.

Beattie, David. "The Bromley affair," *English Magazine*, 9, Fall 1988, pp. 14-19.

Becker, Wesley C., and Gersten, Russell. "A follow-up of Follow Through: The later effects of the direct instruction model on children in fifth and sixth grades," *American Educational Research Journal*, 19 (1), Spring 1982, pp. 75-92.

Berko, Jean. "The child's learning of English morphology," *Word*, 14, 1958, pp. 150-177.

Berliner, David C., and Rosenshine, Barak. "The acquisition of knowledge in the classroom." In R.C. Anderson, R. J. Spiro, and W. E. Montague (Eds.), *Schooling and the Acquisition of Knowledge*, pp. 375-396. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum, 1977.

Bloome, David. "Reading as a social process in a middle school classroom." In David Bloome, (Ed.) *Literacy and Schooling*, pp. 123-149. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1987.

Bond, Guy L., and Dykstra, Robert. "The cooperative research program in first grade reading instruction," *Reading Research Quarterly*, 2 (4), Summer 1967, pp. 5-142.

Bridge, Connie; Winograd, Peter; and Haley, Darliene. "Using predictable materials vs. preprimers to teach beginning sight words," *Reading Teacher*, 36 (9), May 1983, pp. 884-891.

Bussis, Ann M., and Chittenden, Edward A. "Research currents: What the reading tests neglect," *Language Arts*, 64 (3), March 1987, pp. 302-308.

Calkins, Lucy McCormick. *The Art of Teaching Writing.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1986. [ED 263 613; not available from EDRS.]

Calkins, Lucy McCormick. "When children want to punctuate: Basic skills belong in context," *Language Arts*, 57 (5), May 1980, pp. 567-573.

Calkins, Lucy McCormick, and Harwayne, Shelley. *The Writing Workshop: A World of Difference.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1987.

Capra, Fritjov. *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture.* New York: Bantam, 1982.

Carbo, Marie. "Debunking the great phonics myth," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 70 (3), November 1988, pp. 226-240. (a)

Carbo, Marie. "Deprogramming reading failure: Giving unequal learners an equal chance," *Phi Delta Kappan*", 69 (3), November 1987, pp. 197-202. (a)

Carbo, Marie. "Reading style research: 'What works' isn't always phonics," *Phi Delta Kappan, 68 (6), February 1987, pp. 431-435. (b)*

Carbo, Marie. "What reading achievement tests should measure to increase literacy in the U.S.," Phi Delta Kappa *Research Bulletin*, No. 7, October 1988. (b)

Chall, Jeanne S. *Learning To Read: The Great Debate.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1967 and 1983.

Clay, Marie M. "Early childhood and cultural diversity in New Zealand," *Reading Teacher*, 29 (4), January 1976, pp. 333-342. Clymer, Theodore L. "The utility of phonic generalizations in the primary grades," *Reading Teacher*, 16, 1963, pp. 252-258.

Combs, Martha; Russell, Jimmie; Siera, Maureen; and Douglas, Dorothy. "Capable readers, basal reading programs, and skill development hierarchies." Paper presented at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association, 1988.

Commission on Reading of the National Council of Teachers of English. Position statements: "Report on basal readers" and "Basal readers and the state of American reading instruction: A call for action." Urbana, Illinois, 1988.

Corder, Reginald. *The Information Base for Reading: A Critical Review of the Information Base for Current Assumptions Regarding the Status of Instruction and Reading Achievement in Reading in the United States.* Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Research and Development, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1971. 392pp. [ED 054 922]

Crismore, Avon (Ed.) *Landscapes: A State-of-the-Art Assessment of Reading Comprehension Research, 1974-1984.* Bloomington: Indiana University. Final Report, project USDE-C-300-83-0130. 1985. 349 pp. [ED 261360]

DeFord, Diane. "Literacy: reading, writing, and other essentials," *Language Arts, 58* (6), September 1981, pp. 652-658.

Durkin, Dolores. "Influences on basal reader programs," *Elementary School Journal, 87* (3), January 1987, pp. 331-341.

Durkin, Dolores. "Is there a match between what elementary teachers do and what basal reader manuals recommend?" *Reading Teacher, 37* (8), April 1984, pp. 734-744.

Dykstra, Robert. "Phonics and beginning reading instruction." In Charles Child Walcutt, Joan Lamport, and Glenn McCracken (Eds.), *Teaching Reading: A Phonic/Linguistic Approach to Developmental Reading,"* pp. 373-397. New York: Macmillan, 1974.

Eckhoff, Barbara L. "How basal reading texts affect children's writing," Paper presented at the 67th Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 1986. 37pp. [ED 276 969.]

Farr, Roger, and Carey, Robert F. *Reading: What Can Be Measured?* 2nd ed. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1986. 228 pp. [ED 266 438]

Goodman, Kenneth S. "Basal readers: A call for action," *Language Arts,* 63 (4), March 1986, pp. 358-363.

Goodman, Kenneth S. *Theoretically Based Studies of Patterns of Miscues in Oral Reading Performance.* Wayne State University, 1973. 459pp. [ED 079 708]

Goodman, Kenneth S.; Goodman, Yetta; and Hood, Wendy. *Whole Language Evaluation Book.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1988.

Goodman, Kenneth S.; Shannon, Patrick; Freeman, Yvonne; and Murphy, Sharon. *Report Card on Basal Readers.* Katonah, New York: Richard C. Owen, 1988.

Goodman, Yetta M.; Watson, Dorothy J.; and Burke, Carolyn L. *Reading Miscue Inventory: Alternative Procedures.* Katonah, New York: Richard C. Owen, 1987. [ED 280-009; not available from EDRS.]

Gough, Phillip B. A comment on Kenneth Goodman. In M. L. Kamil (Ed.), *Directions in Reading: Research and Instruction,* pp. 92-95. Washington, DC: National Reading Conference, 1981.

Gough, Philip B. "One second of reading: Postscript." In Harry Singer and Robert B. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading,* 3rd ed., pp. 687-688. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1985. [ED 262-389]

Groff, Patrick. "Phonics teaching in leading basal readers," unpublished manuscript, 1988.

Groff, Patrick. *Preventing Reading Failure.: An Examination of the Myths of Reading Instruction.* Portland, Oregon: National Book, 1987. 225pp. [Ed 284 200]

Groff, Patrick, and Seymour, Dorothy Z. *Word Recognition: The Why and the How.* Springfield, Illinois: Thomas, 1987.

Gunderson, Lee, and Shapiro, Jon. "Some findings on whole language instruction," *Reading Canada Lecture, 5,* Spring 1987, pp. 22-26.

Gunderson, Lee, and Shapiro, Jon. "Whole language instruction: Writing in 1st grade," *Reading Teacher, 41* (5), January 1988., pp. 430-437.

Hansen, Jane. *When Writers Read.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1987. [ED 282 226; not available from EDRS.]

Hansen, Jane; Newkirk, Tom; and Graves, Donald M. (Eds.), *Breaking Ground: Teachers Relate Reading and Writing in the Elementary Classroom.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1985. [ED 257 050; not available from EDRS.]

Harste, Jerome C. "Becoming a nation of language learners: Beyond risk." In Jerome C. Harste and Diane Stephens (Eds.), *Toward Practical Theory: A State of Practice Assessment of Reading Comprehension Instruction,"* pp. 8:1-122. Indiana University, Language Education Department, 1985. [ED 264 544]

Harste, Jerome C. *New Policy Guidelines for Reading: Making Connections between Research and Practice.* Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1988.

Harste, Jerome C. "Portrait of a new paradigm: Reading comprehension research." In A. Crismore (Ed.) *Landscapes: A State-of-the-Art Assessment of Reading Comprehension Research, 1974-1984,* pp. 12:1-14. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 1985. [ED 261 350]

Harste, Jerome C.; Woodward, Virginia A.; and Burke, Carolyn L. *Language Stories & Literacy Lessons.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1984. [ED 257 113, not available from EDRS.]

Heine, David. "Readers as explorers: Using background knowledge." In A. Crismore (Ed.) *Landscapes: A State-of-the-Art Assessment of Reading Comprehension Research, 1974-1984,* pp. 9:1-24. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 1985. [ED 261 350]

Henderson, Leslie. *Orthography and Word Recognition in Reading.* New York.: Academic, 1982.

Hoffman, James V., and Rutherford, William L. "Effective reading programs: A critical review of outlier studies," *Reading Research Quarterly, 20* (1), Fall 1984, pp. 79-92.

Holdaway, Don. *The Foundations of Literacy.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1979. [ED 263 549; not available from EDRS.]

Jaggar, Angela, and Smith-Burke, Trika (Eds.) *Observing the Language Learner.* Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1985.

Johnson, Dale D., and Baumann, James F. "Word identification." In P. David Pearson (Ed.), *Handbook of Reading Research,* pp. 583-608. New York: Longman, 1984 [ED 245 195; not available from EDRS.]

Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Langer, Judith A., and Pradl, Gordon. "Standardized testing: A call for action," *Language Arts, 61* (7), November 1984, pp. 764-767.

Lindfors, Judith W. *Children's Language and Learning,* 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1987.

McKenzie, Moira. *Journeys into Literacy.* Huddersfield, England: Schofield & Sims, 1986.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. *Reading Objectives: 1986 and 1988 Assessments.* Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service, 1987. 32pp. [ED 287 876]

Newman, Judith M. (Ed.) *Whole Language: Theory in Use.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1985.

Paris, Scott G. "Teaching children to guide their reading and learning." In Taffy Raphael and R. Reynolds (Eds.), *The Contexts of School-Based Literacy,* pp. 115-130. New York: Random, 1986.

Pearson, P. David (Ed.) *Handbook of Reading Research.* New York: Longman, 1984. [ED 245 195; not available from EDRS.]

Pearson, P. David. "Twenty years of research in reading comprehension." In Taffy Raphael and R. Reynolds (Eds.), *The Contexts of School-Based Literacy,* pp. 43-62. New York: Random, 1986.

Perfetti, Charles A. *Reading Ability.* New York: Oxford University, 1985.

Phillips, Linda M. Using children's literature to foster written language development, 1986. 49pp. [ED 276 027]

Raphael, Taffy., and Reynolds, R. (Eds.) *The Contexts of School-Based Literacy,* New York: Random, 1986.

Ribowsky, Helene. *The Effects of a Code Emphasis Approach and a Whole Language Approach upon Emergent Literacy of Kindergarten Children.* Summary of unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1986. 28pp. [ED 269 720]

Roehler, Laura R; Duffy, Gerald G.; and Meloth, Michael W. "What to be direct about in direct instruction in reading: Content-only versus process-into-content." In Taffy Raphael and R. Reynolds (Eds.), *The Contexts of School-Based Literacy,* pp. 79-95. New York: Random, 1986.

Rosenshine, Barak V. "Skill hierarchies in reading comprehension." In R. J. Spiro, B. C. Bruce, and W. F. Brewer (Eds.), *Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension: Perspectives from Cognitive Psychology, Linguistics, Artificial Intelligence, and Education,* pp. 535-554. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum, 1980.

Rosenshine, Barak, and Stevens, Robert. "Classroom instruction in reading." In P. David Pearson (Ed.), *Handbook of Reading Research*, New York: Longman, 1984, pp. 745-798. [ED 245 195; not available from EDRS.]

Russavage, Patricia M.; Lorton, Larry M.; and Millham, Rhodessa L. "Making responsible instructional decisions about reading: What teachers think and do about basals," *Reading Teacher, 39* (3), December 1985, pp. 314-317.

Shannon, Patrick. "The use of commercial reading materials in American elementary schools," *Reading Research Quarterly, 19* (1), Fall 1983, pp. 68-85.

Shuy, Roger. "A holistic view of language," *Research in the Teaching of English, 15* (2), May 1981, pp. 101-111.

Smith, Frank. *Insult to Intelligence: The Bureaucratic Invasion of Our Classrooms*, New York: Arbor House, 1986.

Smith, Frank. *Psycholinguistics and Reading*. New York, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.

Smith, Frank. *Understanding Reading: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and Learning to Read*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum, 1971, 1978, and 1982 [ED 269 749; not available from EDRS.]

Teale, William H., and Sulzby, Elizabeth (Eds.) *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading*. Writing Research: Multidisciplinary inquiries into the nature of writing series. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1986. [ED 280 004; not available from EDRS.]

Valencia, Sheila., and Pearson, David P. "Reading assessment: Time for a change," *The Reading Teacher, 40* (8), April 1987, pp. 726-732.

Venezky, Richard L.; Koestle, Carl F.; and Sum, Andrew M. *The Subtle Danger: Reflections on the Literacy Abilities of America's Young Adults*. Princeton, New Jersey: Center for the Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, 1987. 67pp. [ED 284 164]

Watson, Dorothy, and Crowley, Paul. "How can we implement a whole-language approach?" In Constance Weaver, *Reading Process and Practice: From Socio-psycholinguistics to Whole Language*, pp. 232-283. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1988 [ED 286 157; not available from EDRS.]

Watson, Dorothy, and Weaver, Constance. "Basals: Report on the Reading Commission Study," *Teachers Networking, 8* (4), May 1988, pp. 1, 10-12.

Weaver, Constance. "Parallels between new paradigms in science and in reading and literary theories: An essay review," *Research in the Teaching of English, 19* (3), October 1985, pp. 298-316.

Weaver, Constance. *Reading Process and Practice: From Socio-psycholinguistics to Whole Language*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1988. [ED 286 157; not available from EDRS.]

Weber, George. "Inner-city children can be taught to read: Four successful schools." In L. C. Gentile, M. L. Kamil, and J. S. Blanchard (Eds.), *Reading Research Revisited*, pp. 527-558. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1983.

"What we know about phonics," *Research in Brief*, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, June 1988.

What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning, 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, 1987. 99pp. [ED 280 940]

Wilson, Marilyn. "Testing and literacy: A contradiction in terms?" In John Beard and Scott McNabb (Eds.), *Testing in the English Language Arts: Uses and Abuses*. Michigan Council of Teachers of English, 1985. Distributed by the National Council of Teachers of English. [ED 263 588]

Wixon, Karen K.; Peters, Charles W.; Weber, Elaine M.; and Roeber, Edward D. "New directions in statewide reading assessment," *The Reading Teacher, 40* (8), April 1987, pp. 749-754.

Yaden, David B. Jr., and Templeton, Shane. *Metalinguistic Awareness and Beginning Literacy: Conceptualizing What It Means to Read and Write*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1986.